Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-TWO • NUMBER ONE • JULY 1986

Losing Central America
Max Singer

Syria: The Cuba of the Middle East?
Daniel Pipes

Petropower and Soviet Expansion
Edward Jay Epstein

Whose Palestine?
Erich Isaac and Rael Jean Isaac

Miss Pym and Mr. Larkin
Joseph Epstein

The Staged 60's—A Story
Louis Rapoport

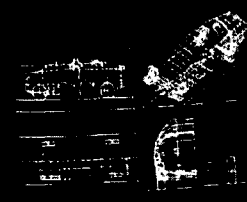
Ortega y Gasset Revisited
Richard John Neuhaus

Books in Review
Stephen Peter Rosen/Harvey Klehr/Micah Morrison/
Alvin H. Bernstein/Terry Teachout

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE/$3.25

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DESIGNING GM BYTE BY BYTE.

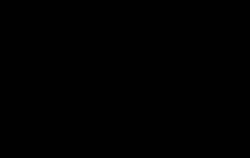


Designing General Motors to become the first 21st century corporation means going back to the drawing board and looking at ourselves in the light of a new age: the Computer Age.

It means thinking in a new mode, accessing the future in a daring, creative new way.

Our goal? A sleeker, more streamlined, computer-driven GM - an organization powered by technology, fueled by brainpower, and outclassing all competition. Our inventive use of computer technology in design, engineering, manufacturing, and safety is producing a GM programmed for quicker response to our customers, better efficiency and outstanding performance. A GM designed to bring you into the future. Byte by byte.

1.



2.

THE GM ODYSSEY: SCIENCE NOT FICTION

GM

3.

4.

1. AUTOMOTIVE DIMENSIONAL CHECKER. Probing car bodies to assure solid, tight fitting assemblies are one hundred and twenty two lasers and cameras.
2. ADVANCED CONCEPTS CENTER. Where creative people work together studying lifestyles of today's consumer to help provide for transportation needs of tomorrow.
3. INFORMATION PROCESSING CENTER. Electronic Data Systems control center helping to streamline data processing and telecommunications functions, enabling General Motors to become more responsive to its customers' needs.
4. INSTRUMENT PANEL. Touch sensitive cathode ray tube with multiple functions that include diagnosing service problems in seconds.
5. MULTIMATCH. Machine vision system used in various quality control procedures that increase manufacturing quality and productivity.
6. NUMERICALLY CONTROLLED ROBOT PAINTERS. These robotic spray painters provide consistent high-quality paint finishes on GM automobiles.

5

6

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 82 NUMBER ONE *JULY 1986*

Articles	11	Losing Central America *Max Singer*
	15	Syria: The Cuba of the Middle East? *Daniel Pipes*
	23	Petropower and Soviet Expansion *Edward Jay Epstein*
	29	Whose Palestine? *Erich Isaac and Rael Jean Isaac*
	38	Miss Pym and Mr. Larkin *Joseph Epstein*
Story	47	The Staged 60's *Louis Rapoport*
Observations	53	Ortega y Gasset Revisited *Richard John Neuhaus*
Letters	2	from *David C. Stolinsky, James L. Bernat, Lawrence I. Bonchek, Branko Popazivanov, Paul S. Appelbaum and Joel Klein, James J. Daly, Stephen M. Baron, Jack Noble, Carl Cohen, Thomas J. Pritzker, James Gardner, P.T. Bauer, James P. Paget, Deborah E. Lipstadt, Daniel Casse*
Books in Review	58	Star Wars, by Alun Chalfont *Stephen Peter Rosen*
	60	The Big Dance, by John Castellucci *Harvey Klehr*
	62	Heroes and Hustlers, Hard Hats and Holy Men, by Ze'ev Chafets *Micah Morrison*
	64	The Last Two Years of Salvador Allende, by Nathaniel Davis *Alvin H. Bernstein*
	68	The Passion of Ayn Rand, by Barbara Branden *Terry Teachout*

Editor: Norman Podhoretz

Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid

Associate Editor: Brenda Brown

Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur

Comptroller: Philip Shamis

Production Manager: Bruce Lodi

Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.25, $33 a year; 3 years $89; 5 years $132—Add $5.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Copyright © 1986 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Readers' Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts, Religion Index One: Periodicals* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Theodore Ellenoff, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Donald M. Blinken, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Norman E. Alexander
Edward E. Elson
Stephen Friedman
Lawrence Goldmuntz
Mark Goodson
Robert H. Haines
Bess Myerson
Robert L. Pelz
Ned Pines
Frederick P. Rose
Gordon S. Rosenblum
Michael Saperstein
Nanette Scofield
Henry Sherman
John Slawson
Laurence A. Tisch

Letters from Readers

Death and the Doctors

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Therefore Choose Death?" [April] Paul S. Appelbaum and Joel Klein perform an important service in calling attention to the "abandonment by the medical profession of an unambivalent commitment to the treatment of the ill." They correctly identify a principal cause of this phenomenon: pressure by courts and ethicists to adopt individual autonomy as the primary good. The competing good —beneficence—has been largely displaced. When I was a medical student twenty-five years ago, it was taken for granted that a physician would "bend the rules" to do what he thought was best for his patient. . . . For example, informed consent was not always obtained from the patient before treatment was begun. Since then, autonomy has been progressively strengthened by court decisions and ethicists' pronouncements, primarily in the area of informed consent. I believe that a balance of beneficence and autonomy was achieved ten to fifteen years ago. Since then, autonomy has outpaced beneficence. For example:

• Interns and medical students may no longer take the extra time to secure the cooperation of a patient who refuses to take his medication. They justify this omission as respect for the patient's autonomy.

• A medical-ethics seminar is addressed by a lawyer who describes recent court decisions that strengthen autonomy. None of those present comments on the possibility of a conflict between law and ethics, much less of one within ethics itself.

• Studies reveal an unsympathetic attitude on the part of hospital staff toward patients with diseases related to smoking or drinking. This attitude is justified by a belief that the patient is responsible for his illness. Patients with AIDS may be subject to even harsher attitudes.

• Complex therapeutic options are presented to the patient and his family for their decision, without the physician's expressing his clear preference.

As a general rule, we should beware of ethical principles that support our decision to do what we already wanted to do because of bureaucratic constraints, economic or social pressure, or plain selfishness. Among the sins for communal confession on the Day of Atonement, the Jewish prayerbook includes the interesting sin of "running to do evil." This may apply to some of our medical-legal-ethical problems. The cessation of active treatment for the senile or incurably ill, the omission of effective treatment at the patient's request, and abortion used to be looked upon as the lesser of evils to which we were reluctantly forced by circumstances beyond our control. Lawyers and ethicists have persuaded us to regard them as definite goods to be eagerly embraced. Such an attitude evokes little reluctance to extending the current trend still further.

In medicine as in other fields, there is nothing so good that an excess of it is not harmful. Even water or oxygen in excess can be fatal. Similarly, too much beneficence can lead to paternalism, the involuntary participation in treatments or experiments, and (in the extreme) the extermination of various "undesirables." But by the same token, too much autonomy can lead to blaming the patient for his illness, an abdication of responsibility for decision-making, an uncaring attitude toward society's unfortunates, and (in the extreme) allowing various "undesirables" to die as we stand idly by. Just as political extremes of Right and Left tend to become indistinguishable in their extremism, so do ethical extremes tend to lead to similarly unethical results. . . .

I strongly favor the right to privacy, which is the legal basis for autonomy. But I recognize that it was invented only a decade ago. I believe it is a mistake to make it superior to "Thou shalt not kill," which has served us well for over three millennia. No one can foresee how far the fragmentation of society will go, but those who encourage it, even for the best of motives, are in fact performing an experiment with all of us as subjects. I don't know about others, but I don't recall having given my informed consent.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY, M.D.
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul S. Appelbaum and Joel Klein fear that the genesis of a new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phenomenon, the physician's purposeful nontreatment of certain critically ill patients, will crack the ethical foundation of the medical profession. Yet discretionary nontreatment is a medical practice with a long tradition. For example, since the introduction of antibiotics in the previous generation, physicians have purposely permitted some elderly and severely demented nursing-home residents to die "naturally" by nontreatment of pneumonia or urinary-tract infection. What is new is that these formerly private decisions between physicians and families now must be made with more public accountability. Also, the availability of sophisticated life-support technologies is producing new clinical tragedies such as permanently noncognitive ("vegetative") patients who in the past would have died.

It is a distinguished medical tradition for physicians to tailor the aggressiveness of treatment to their patient's prognosis. At some point in the care of all patients dying of widespread cancer, for example, the decision is made to withhold any further aggressive therapy and to institute only comfort measures. To remove from the physician the professional discretion to judge whether further aggressive therapy for terminally ill or permanently noncognitive patients is appropriate is to reduce the physician's role merely to that of a life-support technician.

In the medical context, the ethical principle of autonomy and its legal counterpart, the principle of self-determination, are best achieved when patients execute advanced directives. Many states now have statutory provisions, such as durable power-of-attorney acts or terminal-care-document acts, which permit competent patients to stipulate in advance the types and contexts of therapy they wish . . . should they later become incompetent. If advanced directives are satisfactorily arranged, the courts will not later be forced to speculate on the previous wishes of the patient.

Physicians should continue to use their professional judgment to choose the most appropriate therapies for their patients. Ordinarily, the physician's duty will be to use all reasonable means to prolong a patient's life. But when there is clear evidence that a patient wishes to be permitted to die, given a clearly . . . terminal or irreversible illness, to permit his desired natural death unrestrained by inappropriate, invasive, and wasteful intensive therapies satisfies both the highest medical and ethical principles.

JAMES L. BERNAT, M.D.
Norwich, Vermont

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Therefore Choose Death?" Paul S. Appelbaum and Joel Klein give the impression that physicians have recently allowed the intrusion of "quality-of-life issues into routine medical care," leading physicians in some cases to withhold treatment from patients they deem unsuited for it. In truth, however, what has changed is not physicians' morality, but rather the technology to prolong life beyond all reason. Injudicious and overly aggressive care by physicians who feel they must "do something"—and who now have the sophisticated means to do it—is a greater problem. Families of incurable patients are often left emotionally and financially drained by the persistence of physicians who have not learned that it is occasionally wise to abide by the imperative: Don't just do something, STAND THERE!

Some constraints on the use of technology must be accepted. The authors suggest that *any* "diminution of our willingness to undergo sacrifices—. . . time, effort, or money —to sustain each other's lives cannot but reduce societal cohesion." Unfortunately, the romantic concept that society has unlimited resources is simply wrong. Choices must be made every day about allocating resources—whether to limit the number of CAT scanners, open-heart-surgery programs, kidney dialysis, or drug-rehabilitation centers. It is easy to suggest that the most advanced life-support systems be used even for the irrevocably comatose, because the necessary financial sacrifice is not visible to those who must make it. Fortunately, most doctors to whom these patients *are* visible are willing to use common sense, and to recognize that unconscious life is not human life. Most people agree.

Messrs. Appelbaum and Klein do not, and they prove once again, alas, that common sense is an uncommon quality. Where do they think all the hearts for transplantation come from, if not from "brain-dead" individuals? Should we abandon organ transplantation and keep the comatose donors "alive" while others die? These, too, are hard choices, and the naive analysis by Messrs. Appelbaum and Klein is of little help.

LAWRENCE I. BONCHEK, M.D.
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Along with Paul S. Appelbaum and Joel Klein, I am deeply concerned with the increasingly casual acceptance and popularization of infanticide and euthanasia in media, legal, and medical circles. I praise the authors for their excellent analysis of this alarming trend. However, they do not sufficiently explore the horrendous implications and dire consequences for our society of this trend toward "therapeutic nihilism."

In an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (July 14, 1949), entitled "Medical Science Under Dictatorship," Leo Alexander gives a chilling picture of how medical science was perverted and abused by the Nazis. . . . :

> The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitude of the physicians. *It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic in the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived.* This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans. But it is important to realize that the infinitely small wedged-in lever from which this entire trend of mind received its impetus was the attitude toward the nonrehabilitable sick. [Emphasis added] . . .

These warnings of Dr. Alexander in 1949 and of Dr. C. Everett Koop (Surgeon General of the U.S.) today in regard to where a society is heading when it legalizes abortion-on-demand, infanticide, and euthanasia must not be ignored by our medical and legal professions.

BRANKO POPAZIVANOV
Richmond, British Columbia

PAUL S. APPELBAUM and JOEL KLEIN write:

We are pleased that our analysis touched a responsive chord in colleagues like David C. Stolinsky. One of us was approached shortly after the article appeared by a middle-aged physician who told us about his mother, in her eighties, who had been hospitalized a short

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time before at a leading teaching facility. To his surprise, the resident overseeing her care asked the family if he could write a "do not resuscitate" order for the woman, because her "quality of life" was so poor. "Why didn't he ask her or her children how her quality of life was," the physician/son wondered, "before he concluded she would be better off dead? She is a vigorous woman who left the hospital to return to an independent life. I was uncertain if this was a single, anomalous case until I read your article. Now I can see that things have changed a good deal since I went to medical school."

Not all the correspondents, however, are equally supportive of our conclusions. James L. Bernat, emphasizing the value of autonomy, argues that termination or noninitiation of treatment may be justified by a patient's competent desires to forgo care. Some aspects of his letter, however, are puzzling in this regard. If the patient, in fact, is in charge, how is that reconciled with Dr. Bernat's other concern that "To remove from the physician the professional discretion to judge whether further aggressive therapy . . . is appropriate is to reduce the physician's role merely to that of a life-support technician"? Whether or not patients have the right to end their own medical care, it is the unseemly enthusiasm of many physicians to make the decision for them that troubles us most.

Lawrence I. Bonchek, somewhat less temperately, relies on economic arguments to support his belief that the introduction of new, life-sustaining technology all but *compels* physicians to terminate patients' care. If our society ever gets to the point where overt decisions about rationing need to be made (recall that we avoided that question—at no little expense—when dialysis was introduced), it is again unclear to us that the decisions should be made by individual physicians, expressing idiosyncratic values. We tremble at the thought that Dr. Bonchek might some day be in the position of deciding whether either of us is worth tying up a respirator for. More democratic means of making these decisions are clearly essential.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of working in this area is keeping the discourse away from naked appeals to emotion. Although Branko Popazivanov's quotation from Leo Alexander is chilling in its similarity to some of the issues we discussed, our society is so dramatically different from Nazi Germany that such comparisons serve to distract attention from the real issues at hand, and to evoke equally farfetched retorts. An example is Dr. Bonchek's concern that we intend to maintain legions of brain-dead individuals on respirators, thus denying their organs to eager transplant teams. The brain dead are dead; Dr. Bonchek knows that. The real issues are hard enough without inventing false ones.

Affirmative Action

To the Editor of Commentary:

I wish to thank Carl Cohen for his splendid article, "Naked Racial Preference" [March]. I was especially interested in his discussion of "role models" in the *Wygant* case, since here in Minnesota the state community-college system has assigned itself the task of selecting "positive role models" for its preferred employees. . . .

I am a Vietnam veteran. I have worked for the Minnesota community-college system since 1969. As far as I am able to determine, affirmative action played no role in the state's decision to hire me. Since 1969, however, things have changed considerably in Minnesota where affirmative action is concerned, and unfortunately, not all the changes have been for the better.

In 1985, the community-college system, in response to a legislative statute, adopted a document entitled "The Strategic Plan of the Minnesota Community College System." Among the plan's declared goals are the following: "Increase the representation of women, minorities, handicapped, and Vietnam-era veterans within the ranks of the system's staff, especially among administrators and faculty" and make "a concerted effort to recruit, retain, and promote women, minorities, handicapped, and Vietnam-era veterans. . . ."

As stated in the plan, the community-college system also intends to provide "positive role models" for its women, minority, handicapped, and Vietnam-veteran employees as well as "mentoring opportunities for members of these groups. . . ." Aside from the fact that mentor is not a verb, the plan does not explain the meaning of "mentoring opportunities." Presumably the state, in addition to selecting role models, intends to act as wise counsel to its preferred employees. . . . The state allows itself the next decade to accomplish these goals.

Given these aims, one can logically conclude that women, minorities, the handicapped, and Vietnam veterans may not serve as role models for one another or for other employees. They may only receive role-model examples as selected for them by the state of Minnesota. Imagine a black woman with a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Minnesota. If this woman worked for one of our community colleges, the state would now be obligated to provide her with role models and thereafter arrange mentoring opportunities to provide additional wise counsel! Is this the sort of thing affirmative action was intended to do? Should affirmative-action policy rest upon personal insult and degrading assumptions?. . . .

And what will the state do to preferred employees who are inclined to reject state-sponsored models or other wise counsel? Will there be individual mentoring-review boards? Evaluation reports? A "reeducation" summer camp for the stubborn? Since there were about 2,500 community-college employees in Minnesota in 1983-84, nearly half of them women, how many people will have to be hired or reassigned to guide role-model decisions and to carry out mentoring assignments? How much will this activity cost Minnesota taxpayers? . . .

I do not speak for women, minorities, or the handicapped. Nor do I speak for other veterans. Many of these people may disagree with me. I speak only for myself and I speak, it is worth remembering, as one who is supposed to receive the benefits of preferential treatment. In so doing, I ask the community-college chancellor, the State Board for Community Colleges, and all bureaucrats high enough on the ladder to have participated in this intrusive process: on what moral grounds do you propose to select my role models and serve as my mentor? What did you think you were doing when you rashly decided to undertake these tasks? On what moral grounds do you stride into my life to decide to your satisfaction whom I should emulate and whom I should not? You may hire or fire me. You may criticize or approve my classroom work. You may hold me to the terms of our employment contract. You may not,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

however, assume responsibility for private decisions that are properly my own. . . .

In degrading affirmative action, Minnesota, I am certain, did not intend to hurt anyone. Yet it did hurt all the same. We may debate the pros and cons of affirmative action, but we may not debate this crucial point. When affirmative-action policy reinforces the perception of Vietnam veterans and others as somehow inferior . . . , as people who cannot quite measure up or make it on their own, as employees who are not really qualified for the jobs preferential treatment provides, then harm has been done and stereotypes have been reinforced.

To his credit, the chancellor of community colleges in Minnesota has agreed with my protests and has twice assured me that some corrective actions are called for. I might add that corrected attitudes on the part of some state officials are called for as well. As of today, however, "The Strategic Plan" remains in force in Minnesota. . . .

JAMES J. DALY
Fergus Falls Community College
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carl Cohen's "Naked Racial Preference" is a thoughtful as well as thought-provoking analysis of the use of racial criteria to determine . . . minority representation on a school faculty as demanded by affirmative action. He reveals many of the pitfalls and injustices inherent in that enterprise. Yet there is more to it than simply "naked racial preference."

Mr. Cohen takes insufficient account of the larger, more overtly political purpose of affirmative action, which aims to do more than "make whole," in the words of the Supreme Court, the groups victimized by discrimination. Rather, affirmative action is reformist. Indeed, it has to be, for unless it brings about a "homogenized society," as Mr. Cohen rightly calls it, discrimination will continue and victims will continue to be made. . . . Affirmative action aims at bringing us closer to the homogenized society. . . . For the advocates of naked racial preference, quotas, timetables, goals, and so forth are all weapons in the war. If this means proportional distribution of teachers on the basis of the racial composition of the student body, then so be it. As Justice Blackmun said in *Regents* v. *Bakke* (1978), "In order to get beyond racism, we must take account of race." In this reformist view, affirmative action operates on the premise, rarely . . . articulated, that if various elements of the homogenized society can be introduced into . . . our present, tainted society, . . . in time—who knows when?—the entire society will itself become pure.

Mr. Cohen neglects to explain the connection between naked racial preference and this higher goal in the minds of the advocates of affirmative action. . . . Rather, he contents himself with warning us that the use of statistical analyses in defense of naked racial preference by government agencies, e.g., the Jackson School District, raises the specter of every racial, ethnic, and other identifiable group having, and presumably also claiming, a legitimate right to proportional representation. I share his concern, but the Supreme Court has dismissed such claims. In *UJO* v. *Carey* (1977), for example, Justice White, supported by Justices Stevens and Rehnquist, defended the effective elimination of representation for hasidic Jews in Brooklyn on the grounds that "as long as whites [in Brooklyn] as a group were provided fair representation," preference for blacks did not constitute discrimination against whites. . . . The possibility that Mr. Cohen does not seem to consider is that many affirmative-action advocates see the world in only two categories: white and (multiple) minority.

Mr. Cohen further explains that attempts to base remedial measures on "underrepresentation" are "not merely unrealistic, but unwholesome." But he misses, I believe, the most dangerous possibility inherent in statistical measures. If proportional distribution is the goal, as would seem to be the case, then what is to be done if one group is found to be "overrepresented" in a profession, as, for example, Jews in academia? Is the group to be reduced so that its share is proportional? Isn't that the ultimate conclusion toward which proportional distribution points us? Must not the top be lowered in the same way the bottom is raised? That would constitute true equality, albeit at its worst.

STEPHEN M. BARON
DeWitt, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Naked Racial Preference" Carl Cohen says that the Jackson affirmative-action plan is unconstitutional. According to the Supreme Court, he is probably correct. But he is incorrect according to the Constitution, the Fourteenth Amendment to which states, in part: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States . . . nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

When the Amendment was debated and ratified the phrase "privileges or immunities" had a received meaning. That meaning originated implicitly with the Founding Fathers; it was stated clearly in *Corfield* v. *Coryell* (1823), refined in *Abbott* v. *Bayley* (1827), and was repeated many times in the debates of the 39th Congress. In the words of the *Corfield* decision, the phrase referred to those rights "which are, in their nature, fundamental. . . . Protection by the government, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the right to acquire and possess property . . . to pass through, or reside in any other state . . . to claim the benefit of the writ of habeas corpus; to institute . . . actions of any kind in the courts. . . ." This was generally in line with the narrow legal meaning of life, liberty, and property (or "absolute" rights) found in the commentaries of Blackstone and Kent. "Protection" and "liberty" were understood in the most basic sense of "personal security" and "the power of locomotion . . . without imprisonment . . . unless by due course of law . . ."

And then there is the 1866 Civil Rights Bill, which, as Thaddeus Stevens said, it was the purpose of the Amendment to "constitutionalize." The Bill referred to the right, regardless of race, "to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property. . . ." Other rights—e.g., voting and desegregation—were deliberately omitted from the Bill and the Amendment, as a study of the congressional debates makes clear.

In other words, specified fundamental rights—e.g., the right to make a contract—were given added constitutional protection. And the state had to afford equal protection in dealing with those rights, e.g., it had to be color-blind. So if we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are to respect the Constitution, rather than the usurpations of the Court or the outrage of Mr. Cohen and myself, then we should ask: as a result of the Jackson plan, is it legally easier for black public-school teachers to enter into and enforce employment contracts? The answer is no. The layoff provisions in the contract are discriminatory, but the right to contract remains equal. And *that* is the right protected by the Amendment, not the right to have color-blind layoff procedures. This makes the Jackson plan unfair, counterproductive, and stupid—but not unconstitutional.

JACK NOBLE
Los Angeles, California

CARL COHEN writes:

Naked racial preference, as practiced by the Jackson School Board in *Wygant*, is found intolerable by all three of my correspondents. James J. Daly—on the basis of personal experience—concludes that such preference is offensive and demeaning. Stephen M. Baron concludes that such preference is unjust and dangerous. Jack Noble concludes that such preference is counterproductive and stupid. They are all quite right in these judgments, and I thank them for their thoughtful comments.

Mr. Daly is insulted by the condescension of state-authorized preference givers; they will provide him with a mentor, and appoint role models to guide him. His fury is not hard to understand.

Those who presume to serve the interests of minority groups by extending special favor to them in employment, or university admissions, would do well to reread his letter, pondering the consequences of preference upon the spirit and status of those preferred. The injury done to persons unfairly *dis*favored by preferential programs is readily seen. Mr. Daly helps us to see the injury done, in ways uncountable, to those unfairly *favored*. Members of minority groups, blacks above all, whose abilities and efforts have resulted in professional attainments of the finest kind are cruelly undermined by racially-preferential programs. What purports to be helpful to minorities is, in the eyes of the most accomplished, ignominious and hateful.

Members of minority groups given special favor are not normally in a position to say this openly. The reason for this is worth thinking about. One who did receive, or is believed to have received, special preference because of his race must believe either that he needed that preference to be in his present position, or did not need it. If he believes that he did need it, complaint by him about racial preference would suggest that he has been hypocritical in accepting that advantage. If he believes that he did not need it, complaint by him about racial preference would invite the retort that he is selfishly and disloyally upbraiding those in his own ethnic group who would not be where they are but for the racial favoritism given to them. The prudent and understandable course for members of groups receiving preference, therefore (whether or not, as individuals, they needed it), is to refrain from calling attention to the fact of it.

Mr. Daly has been subjected to the ignominy of being treated as though he did need role models and a mentor chosen for him. His letter is a courageous public statement of his resentment and intellectual pride. Many of those in similar circumstances who might wish they were free to write in that same spirit will thank him silently.

Mr. Baron faults me, gently, for taking insufficient account of the larger political purposes of racially-preferential schemes, and neglecting to explain the connections between such programs and their reformist objectives. I share his concern and sought to express it by condemning as unwholesome the goal of social homogeneity that underlies the principle of ethnic proportionality.

Rightly, Mr. Baron is also anxious to emphasize the number and variety of ethnic groups, and the gravity of the error of viewing the world as though consisting simply of whites and non-whites. Because ethnic groups are delineated on different dimensions (race, religion, nationality, etc.), and because groups marked off by gender, by handicap, or by other characteristics inevitably enter the fray, the many elements of the social fabric must overlap and tangle. Therefore, every effort to distribute social goods proportionally, by group, is doomed to internal incoherence. The squabbles thus engendered must yield never-ending ethnic resentment and animosity.

Racial preference based upon alleged "underrepresentation," Mr. Baron further observes, has the dangerous consequence of necessarily injuring some members of groups which, by whatever measures chosen, are in some spheres "overrepresented"—Jews in the academic world being a good example. He is dead right. This important point (for a more extended treatment of it, see my article, "Why Racial Preference Is Illegal and Immoral," COMMENTARY, June 1979) deserves reemphasis: what is given to some simply on the basis of their ethnic identification must be taken from others simply on the basis of *their* ethnic identification. Preference by race, without regard to past injury or desert, *cannot* be benign.

If Mr. Baron and I have some differences they are of little moment. By underscoring the injustice and the danger of racial preference he serves us well, and I join him in that.

Mr. Noble, understandably outraged by naked racial preference, nevertheless believes that, in view of the historical protection given in our legal system to the right of contract, the racial preference in the contract between the Jackson School Board and the Jackson teachers is regrettably constitutional. I share the judgment of the American Federation of Teachers that this conclusion is mistaken. There are, as there ought to be, powerful protections for contractual agreements between unions and employers, even when third parties do not find the contents of those agreements wise or fair. But when, as in this case, an employment contract imposes indubitable constitutional injury upon innocent parties (Wygant and her fellow teachers) by causing their loss of employment for no other reason than that theirs was the wrong skin color, that contract ought not stand immune. Contracts between unions and employers must not—and, I submit, constitutionally may not—waive or bypass the right of each employee, as an individual, not to be burdened by an employer's decisions based flatly upon race.

Just as I had finished writing my response, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision in the case of *Wygant* v. *Jackson Board of Education*. It held that racially-preferential protections against layoffs violate the equal-protection clause of the Constitution and are not permissible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art and Civilization

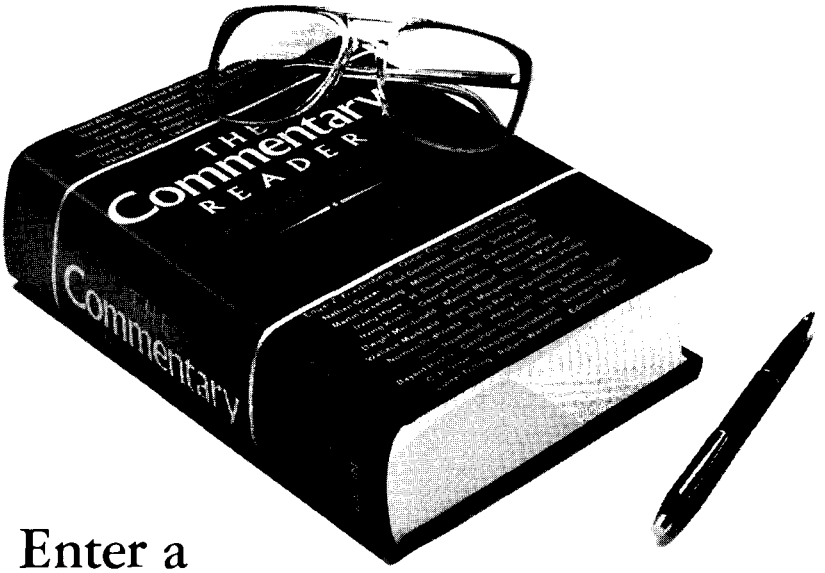
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As I read James Gardner's "Indian Art—and Ours" [April], my reactions turned from confusion to dismay. Initially it appeared that Mr. Gardner's intention was to review the exhibitions which were taking place as part of the "Festival of India." He begins by quoting several historical figures who, at some point, had proclaimed the absolute lack of value in all things Indian. But then, as the article progresses, Mr. Gardner seems grudgingly to accept certain refreshing and noteworthy aspects of Indian art. It is not until the third to last paragraph that we learn his true thesis—that the art and culture of each civilization can be ranked in terms of superior or inferior and that, in fact, "our" (which I assume to mean Western European) art and culture are *superior* to those of India. Several comments need to be made about this thesis, the author's conclusions, and the unspoken consequences of such an approach.

First, it strikes me that the mere attempt to define "superior" art betrays a provincialism which has plagued our Western civilization. The concept of superior and inferior art or civilization is not an absolute concept, but rather one which is a function of ideals, goals, and standards which may vary with geography, history, and possibly other factors. How does one rank the inner vitality of pre-Islamic Indian sculpture with the outward realism of Western sculpture? How do we crank into the equation the religious motivation behind Indian art as opposed to the variety of purposes in much of Western art? When we make this ultimate judgment, what weight do we give to the quality of form versus function or to the impact of an art either domestically or internationally? . . .

Perhaps our own civilization would be better served by attempting to illuminate the differences in the art of various cultures whose diversity has been encouraged by several thousand years of relative isolation. I propose that we would be better served by looking at these matters not with the eye of a mathematician in search of a common denominator, but rather with the eye of a historian who spots trends and influences rather than absolutes. Indian art has strengths

A special offer for you . . .



Enter a three-year subscription and get a *FREE* bonus — The Commentary Reader

A limited number of copies of *The Commentary Reader* — a selection of 51 of the finest articles and stories from the first twenty years of **Commentary** (1945-1965) — are available FREE! Simply return the subscription application below to begin receiving **Commentary** every month as well as this 763-page anthology of distinguished writing.

Commentary *America's Most Influential Magazine*

Please mail by August 1, 1986 to receive your bonus of The Commentary Reader

☐ **YES!** Enter my 3-year pre-paid subscription to **Commentary.** Please send my copy of *The Commentary Reader* immediately.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I prefer to pay as indicated.

☐ My check for $89 is enclosed

☐ Please charge $89 to my credit card

☐ American Express ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa

(Add $5 per year for foreign and Canadian)

_____ Expires _____

Signature _____

COMMENTARY • 165 EAST 56th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and weaknesses whether we use a Western or an Eastern sense of value. But the concept of "superior" or "inferior" is, I believe, too high-minded and ultimately of questionable value.

By opening with such esteemed commentators as Babur and Macaulay, does Mr. Gardner give the Western reader any choice but to agree with his reassuring conclusion that ours is a superior culture? Should we not give weight to the historical impact of a culture and its art? In determining superiority, how do we deal with the fact that until 1949 Buddhism had a deep and profound impact on the cultures of Asia and the West? It can be said that Buddhism has been the dominant ideological force in the lives of over 20 percent of the world's population. For anyone who understands the East, it is axiomatic that religion, culture, and art are inseparable.

Perhaps of greatest concern, however, are the potential implications of the concept of a superior culture. Do superior cultures come from or create superior men? Is the white culture of Africa superior to that of the blacks? Or would it be more appropriate and instructive to say that each culture has its own strengths and weaknesses? How about the Chinese or Japanese—where do they rank in our hierarchy? And finally, what should we do with all those inferior cultures which are laying claim to the earth's limited resources?

If the purpose of Mr. Gardner's article is to provoke questions and debate, I say bravo. But if he is seriously putting forth the concept of the superiority of Western art and culture, I say the thought is provincial in outlook, counterproductive in concept, and of concern in its consequence.

THOMAS J. PRITZKER
President, Hyatt Corporation
Chicago, Illinois

JAMES GARDNER writes:

I am grateful to Thomas J. Pritzker for affording me the opportunity to expand upon certain themes in my article with which he takes issue. I should begin by saying, however, that I do not admire the art of other cultures only "grudgingly." I meant it when I wrote of India that "within the province of sculptured stone and cast bronze . . . it is difficult to name any nation that has achieved greatness so instinctively," and that " . . . it is easy to believe that the world has not produced builders with architectural instincts superior to those of the builders of Islam."

Furthermore, my purpose in writing the article, my "true thesis," was to render an honest judgment of what I took to be the excellences of Indian art. Although the concluding discussion was an integral part of the whole, it was neither the main point, nor the veiled message, of the article.

According to Mr. Pritzker, my desire to compare and also to rate the artistic achievements of different cultures "betrays a provincialism which has plagued our Western civilization." I believe, however, as I wrote in the article, that the desire to seek out the art of other cultures is itself specifically a Western attitude, unique, so far as I know, in the history of the world. Mr. Pritzker may have mistaken my position for one which prevailed prior to our century, when Westerners believed, as other civilizations have believed of themselves, that theirs was somehow at the center of creation. Through the efforts of writers like Romain Rolland and Roger Fry, both of whom I cited in my article, there evolved in the West a healthy and, I believe, an admirable affection for artifacts that implicitly reject the canons of Western taste.

But in allowing for this proliferation of formal possibilities, need we also believe that all art and all cultures are equally good? Or may we believe that no one mode of art is uniquely qualified to generate excellence? There is a big difference between these two theses. I assert the latter to be true. Many different cultures have created works of great beauty, just as many have probably never created a single work of art worthy of the name. I believe that within a single culture certain aesthetic specimens will be greater than others, and also that certain aesthetics have generated more good art than others.

Since my concern here and in my article is with art, I feel no compunction in overlooking the religious questions Mr. Pritzker raises, but I must reject his claim that "For anyone who understands the East, it is axiomatic that religion, culture, and art are inseparable." For me this is not axiomatic, especially not in the evaluation of a work of art. Two statues of Krishna from 13th-century Mysore, identical in their artistic and religious terms, can nevertheless vary considerably in the degree and excellence of their realization, for reasons that have nothing to do with style or culture. Furthermore, no one who is sensitive to the beauties of sculpture will fail to see that almost any Gandharan Buddha is better than almost any piece of 19th-century French or English academic sculpture.

Finally, Mr. Pritzker advocates a quest for diversity rather than for absolutes. Perhaps I would share his preference if I did not think it possible to achieve both. How can one say, as I feel we all must, that the cave paintings of Ajanta are superior to the covers of *Time* magazine unless one perceives, despite their diversity, a thread of continuity running through both, making such a qualitative comparison possible? I believe that all art, whether a sonnet or a cathedral or a symphony or a mural, has this same thread of excellence running through it. Whenever we respond to the purely formal beauty of art, this is what we are seeing, this is what causes us to reject as alien the bad art of our own creating, and to feel at times a community with artists who lived at a distance of thousands of miles or thousands of years. I can conceive of no doctrine more liberal or more cosmopolitan than this.

As Mr. Pritzker intimates, my purpose was, at least partially, to provoke questions and debate, and thus I am gratified that he has taken the trouble to consider my arguments. But I do not feel that it is "counterproductive," as he suggests, to consider the competing merits of civilizations along the lines I have discussed. Not to do so is perhaps to provoke a lassitude of response that, by allowing everything, loses the energy sincerely to admire anything. To the truly liberal mind, a distinction should be drawn between the universal possibility of achieving excellence, and the achievement itself. To the truly liberal mind it should be as difficult to bestow unmerited praise as to withhold it where it is due. That is why I am confident in repeating the conclusion of my article by saying that in a universe of many excellences, the art of the West, taken together and accord-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to universal principles of comparison, must be considered the greatest in human history.

Ethiopia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was surprised that Arch Puddington ["Ethiopia: The Communist Uses of Famine," April] did not mention that from 1978 through 1982 the Ethiopian government received $1 billion in official Western aid, including substantial U.S. aid, and even more multilateral aid with a substantial U.S. component.

P.T. BAUER

London, England

The Fate of Vietnam

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an American who lived through the Vietnam-war years, I felt a curious mixture of sorrow, anger, and vindication on reading "Vietnam: How We Deceived Ourselves" by Doan Van Toai [March]. Throughout the period, those of us who knew the nature of the enemy and wanted victory for the South Vietnamese were vilified unmercifully by the same people who applauded Doan so warmly in 1970 when, as a delegate from the Vietnamese student opposition, he addressed anti-war rallies in Berkeley. Without any particular gift for prophecy, we saw then the inevitable outcome, in which, as Doan says, "lay terror and destitution for my country." We did not need a crystal ball to tell us what was in store for these people should our resolve fail, for it was a fate that had already overtaken many peoples at the hands of the same despicable soul mates: Marxist-Leninists the world over. Our vindication, however, was greatly tempered by the suffering inflicted on the Vietnamese people—so much so that it is embarrassing even now to give voice to it. The only possible good that could come of what happened in Vietnam would be if each country threatened by the same red plague could be properly forewarned by witnesses like Doan.

As for Americans, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn put it best when he said that the witnesses from all over the world have been heard from, the evidence is in, and there is no longer any excuse not to understand the consequences of our past failures and ignorance. For Doan's country it is too late; for Nicaragua, El Salvador, . . . and others there may still be time.

JAMES P. PAGET

Spokane, Washington

The Press and the Holocaust

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was gratified by Daniel Casse's review and kind remarks regarding my book, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* [Books in Review, April].

He seems, however, to have misunderstood one important aspect of the book. I do not claim—as he seems to think I do—that the press creates government policy. The book does not attempt to "hold the press responsible for American policy." In fact, as I demonstrate in the book, the British press pursued this story with far greater energy and yet British policy was not dramatically different from American policy.

In his attempt to argue that I believe that increased press coverage would have completely changed American rescue policy, Mr. Casse seems to have missed a crucial paragraph in the book, despite the fact that he quotes the paragraph immediately preceding it. Both the government and the press treated the Holocaust with equanimity and virtually ignored what was happening, and in that respect I observe, and Mr. Casse quotes, "the press was ultimately as culpable as the government." But then I continue, and Mr. Casse does not, that "there is, of course, no way of knowing whether anything would have been different if the press had actively pursued this story. The press did not have the power to stop the carnage or to rescue the victims. The Allies might have remained just as committed to inaction, even if they had been pressured by the press. But in a certain respect that is not the question one must ask. The question to be asked is did the press behave in a responsible fashion? Did it fulfill its mandate to its readers?" Obviously, as both Mr. Casse and I absolutely agree, it did not. This is the crux of *Beyond Belief* and not whether the press makes American foreign policy.

DEBORAH E. LIPSTADT

University of California
Los Angeles, California

DANIEL CASSE writes:

Deborah E. Lipstadt and I disagree on what the responsibility of the press is. In my review I charged her not with believing that during the Holocaust the press could have influenced the public and the government, but with blaming it nonetheless for not having tried to do so.

To understand by what standards Miss Lipstadt assesses the responsibility of the press one need only examine her treatment of, to use her example, the British press during the war. She is absolutely right that British policy toward European Jews did not differ substantially from American policy. Yet she praises the British press less for its coverage of the Holocaust than for its "call to action" which, according to her, was "a critical factor in arousing interest and concern of both the public at large and opinion-makers."

Conversely, Miss Lipstadt criticizes American editors not just for refusing to believe reports from Europe, but for failing to create a public outcry in response to them. As she writes: "The difference between [those few American publications that reported extensively on the Holocaust] and the vast majority of the press is not between belief and disbelief but between action and inaction, passion and equanimity.... They were convinced the Allies could so something...."

In her letter, Miss Lipstadt insists that I have missed the crucial question of *Beyond Belief*, namely, "Did the press behave in a responsible fashion?" Yet it is impossible to answer this question without knowing what she means in claiming that the "press was ultimately as culpable as the government." Culpable of what? The only meaning I am able to derive is that Miss Lipstadt believes that the press—like the government—is responsible for advocating and creating policy. I maintain that the job of the press is simply to report the news; and this, as Miss Lipstadt has shown us, is what the press failed to do during the Holocaust.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

In the world of ideas, no other magazine comes close.

COMMENTARY 165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022

I want to discover Commentary's world of ideas. Please enter my twelve-month subscription for the regular price of $33.00.

☐ My check for $33.00 is enclosed. ☐ Bill me

Name

Address

City State Zip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Losing Central America

Max Singer

ONE of the keys to the outcome of the Nicaraguan conflict is the anomalous reaction to it around the world. All it takes to appreciate that anomaly—which is "no accident" and is not generically unique to Nicaragua—is a brief rehearsal of the basic facts.

A civil war, then, is taking place in Nicaragua. On one side are the Sandinista party (FSLN) and the Nicaraguan government, which the FSLN acquired by fraud and holds by force. The FSLN is a Marxist-Leninist party closely allied with the Soviet Union and Cuba. It receives large amounts of Soviet aid which it is using to build the biggest armed forces in Central America. Since it seized power after the overthrow of Somoza in 1979, between five and ten thousand operatives have come from the Communist bloc and other states involved in international terrorism to help the Sandinistas set up their military and internal-security programs (about one foreigner for every 50 people in Nicaragua's non-farm labor force).

Externally, the Sandinistas have committed aggression by means of armed subversion against their three neighbors (El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica). At home, they have attacked the free trade unions and all other independent institutions; they are trying to replace the Catholic Church with an atheistic "church of the poor"; they have persecuted the black and Indian minority population; and they have undermined the economy. They have also established an elaborate secret-police apparatus which makes extensive use of torture and murder, and now holds 6,500 political prisoners in inhuman conditions (in addition to 2,500 of Somoza's National Guardsmen who have been held for more than seven years already).

The other side in the Nicaraguan civil war—usually called the "*contras*"*—includes virtually the whole spectrum of Nicaraguan political life from Left to Right, all sectors of society, and the largest volunteer (unpaid) peasant army raised in Latin America in fifty years. The aims of this popular-resistance movement, whose leadership had been part of the fight against Somoza, are democracy, independence, and freedom of religion, plus some vague economic and social reforms.

Ranged on the side of the Sandinistas are Mexico, the major Latin American democracies, Canada, the European democracies (except Germany), and the Socialist International. Some of their support—including hundreds of millions of dollars—goes directly to the Sandinistas. Some of it takes the form of backing the so-called Contadora process, the diplomatic effort organized by Mexico and aimed at a settlement which would destroy the *contras* in exchange for promises by the Sandinistas to refrain from external aggression and perhaps also to move toward internal pluralism.†

In the U.S. almost the entire Democratic party and most of the mainstream church organizations are also lined up behind the Sandinistas. On the other hand, the U.S. government, some private American citizens, and other countries acting in secret (probably including Israel and Taiwan) are on the side of the *contras*. A majority of the members of the Organization of American States (OAS), representing the whole of Latin America, also favors the *contras*, but the issue has not been brought up in the OAS and so this group has not played a prominent role in the debate over Nicaragua.

This description of the Nicaraguan conflict must sound like madness to anyone unfamiliar with the facts. In a civil war pitting a Communist tyranny supported by the Soviet Union and the terrorist powers against a popular, nationalist democratic group supported by the United States, why should most of the democracies side with the Communists? Why should the victims and potential victims of Sandinista aggression oppose the Sandinistas' enemies? Why should Christian organizations side with the party that persecutes the Christian faithful? Obviously most of the people

MAX SINGER, whose articles in COMMENTARY include "The Record in Latin America" (December 1982) and "Can El Salvador Be Saved?" (December 1981), is a founder and former president of the Hudson Institute. Currently he is president of the Potomac Organization, a consulting firm in Washington, D.C.

* Often the name "*contras*" is used by their enemies as shorthand for "counterrevolutionary." But here it is used the way Jeane J. Kirkpatrick uses it, to stand for "counter-tyranny."

† Originally the Contadora countries were Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela. Recently Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay have been added as the "Contadora support group." Five Central American countries (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala) have also been associated with the process.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the democratic world who are lined up with the Communists must see the facts differently from the way they are summarized above.

Some, of course, do. But many of the key participants in the debate recognize, at least privately, the truth of some such description as I have just given. Others simply regard the truth about Nicaragua as irrelevant—their position is determined by other concerns.

IN TRYING to understand why the *contras* have so little political support from those who might have been expected to side with them, we can begin with Europe.

When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979 they engaged the hopes and sympathy of people throughout Western Europe because they were part of a broad Nicaraguan coalition committed to democracy and national independence. The *contras*, on the other hand, had a dark birth—as a small-scale effort by the CIA, using former Somoza National Guard officers, to create a thorn in the side of the FSLN and to inhibit or serve as a bargaining chip in limiting Nicaraguan support of the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador.

By now the Sandinistas have clearly betrayed the democratic promises they originally made. Conversely, as I have already noted, the *contras* have become a genuinely indigenous popular movement whose political leadership mainly consists not of former Somocistas but of former allies of the Sandinistas in the revolution that overthrew Somoza. Nevertheless, the outdated perceptions of 1979 continue to influence opinion in Western Europe.

One reason for the persistence of these outdated perceptions is that Europeans tend to deal with Central America not on the merits but as an expression of their attitudes toward the United States. But an even more critical reason the Europeans have not realized what is happening is the confusion of messages from Nicaragua's neighbors. There is a wolf among the sheep in Central America, but the sheep are not acting in the way an innocent observer would expect sheep to act when a wolf is in their midst. They are not uniting against the common danger, or crying together for outsiders to save them from the wolf. On the contrary, many Central American voices are going along with Mexico's program to protect the Sandinistas from the *contras*.

Of course the Contadora countries do not say that their aim is to protect the Sandinistas from the *contras*. They say that Central America should settle its disputes peacefully and without foreign interference. But the members of the Contadora group know that there is much more foreign interference on the side of the Sandinistas than on the side of the *contras*. They know that they will not be able substantially to reduce this foreign help to the Sandinistas. They know that the *contras* cannot survive against Soviet guns without U.S. aid. They know that the Sandinistas will never really share power with democratic elements in Nicaragua. Thus they are in effect working to eliminate the *contras* and leave the Sandinistas fully in power.

But why should they do this?

A large part of the answer has to do with the unresolved dependency relationships of these countries with the U.S.*

Dependency on the U.S. is a pervasive influence on events in Latin America, often serving as an excuse for passivity in the face of danger, frequently manifesting itself in ritualistic denial. For example, some of the most sophisticated and "anti-American" Mexicans today think they can afford to oppose the U.S. (thereby demonstrating their supposed independence) and cooperate with the Sandinistas (thereby pacifying the Communists and other leftist elements within their own country) because if the worst were to come to the worst, the U.S. would never let Mexico fall into Communist hands.

COSTA RICA is another example. A solid majority of Costa Ricans and their political leaders know the facts about the conflict in Nicaragua. Accordingly, they oppose and are afraid of the Sandinistas and prefer the resistance. (They are also very pro-American.) The two major newspapers (*La Nación* and *La República*) have strongly argued for some time that Costa Rica will be in grave danger if the Sandinistas are allowed to consolidate their power. When Luis Alberto Monge was President of Costa Rica, he told many people, including the Kissinger Commission, that he thought so, too. There is every reason to believe that this was truly his view. Nevertheless Monge often made statements, and his government often took actions, that he knew would help the Sandinistas. Conversely, Costa Rica was rarely active in organized opposition to the Sandinistas.

Now Monge has been succeeded as President by Oscar Arias, a member of his own party, Partido de Liberación Nacional (PLN). Before his election, Arias indicated both privately and publicly that he shared Monge's ideas about the Nicaraguan civil war. Yet Arias, together with the President of Guatemala, Mario Vinicio Cerezo, is moving toward the Mexican position.

Undoubtedly dependency is a major factor in this shift. Even apart from the use of force (and Costa Rica has no army), Costa Ricans are not accustomed to assuming responsibility for their own security. In general, their normal behavior is to wait and see what the U.S. is going to do before taking a position, and when they see how hard it is for the Reagan administration to get congres-

* For a fuller discussion of this issue, see "Mexico and Other Dominoes" by Carlos Rangel, COMMENTARY, June 1981 and "The Trouble With Latin America" by Jean-François Revel, COMMENTARY, February 1979.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sional approval for military aid to the *contras*, they begin to wonder whether the U.S. will stick with the Nicaraguan resistance.

But there are reasons that go beyond dependency. For one thing, important elements of the PLN, including such distinguished democratic figures as José Figueres and Daniel Oduber, are explicitly or in effect Sandinista supporters. Some are genuine believers; some (particularly among the younger men) think that if Costa Rica refrains from working against the Sandinistas, Nicaragua will refrain from threatening Costa Rica; some are being manipulated by personal and financial pressures; some fear retaliation of various kinds for anti-Sandinista activity (the Mexicans arranged to have a recent Costa Rican Foreign Minister—Fernando Volio—fired because he took strong anti-Sandinista positions); some think that the Sandinistas are going to win and that it is therefore useless and dangerous to act against them.

In each of the Contadora countries there are local circumstances that help explain why those governments, none of which is pro-Sandinista, are working to isolate the *contras*. And each of the Latin American governments realizes that it would not get any special advantage from saving Nicaragua from the Sandinistas, while any government that were to go out front to support the *contras* would certainly have to pay a special price. It would be jumped on not only by the Left but also by all those who have been led to believe that the only basis for supporting the *contras* is extreme conservatism or obeisance to the U.S. How could a government justify spending the political capital that would have to be committed to such an extraneous controversy—especially since U.S. support for the *contras* seems neither effective nor reliable?

The same pattern of incentives applies in Europe, and the stand of the European democracies thus reinforces the tendency of the Latin American countries to passivity.

THIS failure of the democracies, both in Europe and in Latin America, to speak clearly against the Sandinistas and for the *contras* is bound to have a profound impact on the people of Nicaragua themselves.

There are several different "audiences" in Nicaragua, each of which has to try to figure out who is likely to end up in control of the country. The first audience is the general population who can in small ways help either the *contras* or the Sandinistas or can stay strictly neutral. Second is the part of the urban population that might try to start a clandestine resistance movement against the Sandinistas—despite the horror of such warfare and the difficulty of clandestine operations against the brutal, state-of-the-art security apparatus that East Germans and others have provided to the FSLN. Third are those who might in a crisis participate in a "general uprising." Fourth are the troops of the Sandinista army who will fight either well or poorly when they get into heavy combat with the *contras*, depending to some extent on how they see the legitimacy and future of the Sandinista regime. (So far these Sandinista troops have mostly fought poorly.) Finally there are the Sandinistas themselves.

Most discussion of what will influence the actions of Nicaraguans has emphasized factors like Sandinista repression, living conditions, perceptions about *contra* leadership and policy, etc. But Nicaraguans would be superhuman if their actions were not also strongly influenced by who looks to them like the winner. Most people are reluctant to risk torture, death, or even loss of income, when there seems little chance of success.

How do prospects look today to those in Nicaragua who are deciding how to bet their lives and who know all too well that the *contras* will be defeated unless they get a continuous supply of military assistance from the U.S.?

Probably they can prudently bet that President Reagan will continue to believe in the *contra* cause. But from a distance the struggles in Congress over *contra* aid must have produced some doubt as to whether the President would have enough political capital to win a series of such battles. And the Nicaraguan trying to judge the reliability of U.S. aid cannot take much comfort from the tides of the debate in Congress or the country so far.

It is true that by 1985 congressional and much other influential opinion in the U.S. had clearly begun to recognize the truth about the Sandinista regime, and to turn away from supporting it. But this must be a very limited source of reassurance to someone who is wondering about the reliability of the U.S. First he must be concerned about the five-year period that elapsed before the U.S. policy debate caught up with the facts of the Nicaraguan conflict: safety requires a faster response. Second, it must worry him that many of those in the U.S. who have recently lost their illusions about the Sandinistas now have nearly equally false information about the *contras*—much of it from the same sources that propagated their former views.

Any Nicaraguan trying to judge the reliability of the U.S. commitment to the *contras* must be struck by how few of the Congressmen who have recently become disillusioned with the Sandinistas seem to have drawn any conclusions from their experience. They are not acting as if they were angry at having been deceived for years, or as if they were concerned about the continuing power and consequences of the system responsible for the long success of the Sandinista deception. And those who have been anxiously following our political struggle over *contra* aid must be frustrated by how much more the outcome is influenced by extraneous elements in U.S. politics than by the reality in Nicaragua.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the Sandinistas themselves, so far they have been able to have it both ways. They speak and act like Communists, brutally suppressing democratic organizations, but they are treated with great respect by most of the democratic world. They do not need to feel at all isolated, and they have not been forced to choose between Communism and the West. They must be greatly reassured by the steady stream of encouragement from all the democracies.

Think how different it is for an Afghan government official at an international conference. Unlike the Sandinistas, who are regarded as heroes, Afghan officials are despised because they represent a brutal regime held in power by Soviet troops against a popular nationalist force. Of course there are no Soviet troops as such in Nicaragua, but there are hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Soviet arms and nearly half as many Communist-bloc foreigners (including East Germans and Bulgarians) per capita in Nicaragua supporting Sandinista repression as there are Soviets in Afghanistan supporting the Afghan Communist party. If this similarity between the two situations were reflected in the treatment of the Sandinistas—if, that is, they began to be greeted with the moral contempt that is generally directed by the democracies at the Afghan Communists—it is reasonable to wonder how many defections or other strains might materialize among them.

Think also how great a boost it would be for the morale of the *contras* if they were accorded the same kind of international respect and sympathy that the anti-Communist Afghan *mujaheddin* get from the democracies—even though, ironically, the commitment of the *contras* to democratic values is far greater than that of the *mujaheddin*.

THERE is, however, little hope any longer that the democracies can be turned away from their support of the Communist side in the Nicaraguan civil war. The case is too hard to make without the Central Americans, especially Costa Rica.

Given this problem, and given all the opposition in Congress to the *contras*, President Reagan will find it hard, if not impossible, to dissuade those in Honduras who feel that their most prudent course is to limit *contra* use of Honduran territory. If the Hondurans were to take steps in this direction, the smell of defeat might begin to hang over the *contras*, and the resulting downward momentum could destroy them faster than we could act to save them.

With this accomplished, the Sandinistas would be able to consolidate their power at home and would be ready to move in one of two directions abroad. They might decide to step up the guerrilla war in El Salvador and Guatemala, perhaps maneuvering so that the armies of those countries felt forced to take power again. The guerrillas, heavily supported from Nicaragua, including "disguised" Nicaraguan personnel, would be in a good position to defeat such politically isolated post-coup governments, in the kind of long drawn-out political-military struggle we have seen before.

Alternatively, the Sandinistas could first go after Costa Rica and Honduras. There the technique would probably be to use groups that were not themselves Communist but were sympathetic and vulnerable to Communist control, and which with Sandinista, Mexican, and Cuban help could obtain power without Nicaragua's army crossing the border. The majority of the people would want to resist, but they would be divided and sapped by doubt of their chances, and any cry to Washington would be drowned out by strong local voices telling us that our "help" was unwanted and unneeded.

Unless we were lucky, there would be no point in this process at which the U.S. could turn the tide, for we too would be divided and sapped by doubt—not so much of our chances as of whether the Sandinistas had "really" broken their agreement. Either way, thanks to a combination of European apathy, Mexican cynicism, Central American dependency, Communist skill and energy, and U.S. disunity, Central America would within five or ten years be as Communist as Eastern Europe. Not only would additional millions of poor souls be doomed to live under totalitarian tyranny, but a great opportunity would also have been lost to demonstrate that people willing to fight for their freedom can successfully resist the Communist coalition and the juggernaut of lies, deceit, and brutality it always sets in motion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Syria: The Cuba of the Middle East?

Daniel Pipes

WHEN U.S. Navy jet fighters attacked Syrian positions in Lebanon in December 1983, they did so because these positions were deemed intolerable to vital American interests. But just seven months later Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy was condoning the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, testifying before Congress that the U.S. government considered Damascus to be a "helpful player" there.

A similar reversal took place concerning the question of Syrian involvement in terrorism. Top officials had reached complete agreement that Syria had a major role in the October 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger accused the Syrian government of "sponsorship and knowledge and authority" for this crime, and Secretary of State George P. Shultz said that "Syria must bear a share of responsibility." President Reagan stated that Syria "facilitates and supplies instruments for terrorist attacks on the people of Lebanon." But a year and a half later, in gratitude for help with the release of American hostages from TWA flight 847, President Reagan conspicuously omitted Syria from a speech about state-sponsored terrorism.

In May of this year, the same pattern emerged again. One day after Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead acknowledged that the United States "has no reason to doubt" Syrian responsibility for an attempt to bomb an El Al plane leaving London, a White House spokesman called this a "premature" conclusion.

The fact that Syria is seen in so inconsistent a manner reflects the odd place of the Middle East in American politics. Americans know that North Korea sides with the Soviet Union and South Korea with the United States, that East and West Germany fit the same pattern, as do Vietnam and Thailand, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Most great-power alignments are not in dispute; Americans usually understand who is the foe and who the friend.

But not in the Middle East. There the basic question of who is on what side is constantly being argued. Is Jordan a friend of the United States or not? Does Kuwait represent American interests? How close is Algeria, North Yemen, or Iran to the Soviet Union? Middle Eastern states seem to exist, politically, outside the terms of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry.

What makes the region even more eccentric is the fact that the lines of the American debate cut across the normal liberal and conservative positions. Both Saudi Arabia and Israel, for example, attract support from all areas of the U.S. political spectrum. To make matters even more confusing, liberals not infrequently adopt a conservative position on Middle East issues (as in the case of liberal Congressmen who vote against arms sales except to Israel), and vice versa (as in the case of conservatives who advocate supporting every close ally except Israel).

These inconsistencies result from the fact that U.S. discussion about the Middle East is bound almost exclusively to regional considerations. Where a state such as Egypt stands on the great issues of our time is obscured by the salience of its relationship with Israel. Financial interests (especially oil), religious concerns, and an obsession with the Arab-Israeli conflict drive the debate. Rarely does one hear about such issues as freedom of speech, democracy, or other of the larger principles of American foreign policy. As a result, American views toward the Middle East develop in an ideological vacuum.*

This same inconsistency applies to Syria, the state that has emerged in recent years as the focus of Middle East activity. The regime of Hafez al-Assad occupies an uncertain place in American eyes. Even the markedly conservative Reagan administration has reached no clear position, for example, on the nature of Syrian relations with the USSR or the proper U.S. response to them. This explains why high-level officials within the government have a tendency to change their minds and even contradict themselves about Syria. And it points to the need for a closer look at where Syria does stand in international politics—a ques-

DANIEL PIPES is director designate of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and editor of *Orbis*. Mr. Pipes wrote this article while a visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

* I have documented this phenomenen, offered an explanation for it, and argued for its significance in "Breaking All the Rules: The Middle East in U.S. Policy," *International Security*, 9 (1984), pp. 124-50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion that turns out upon inspection to have a strikingly clear answer.

II

LET us begin with the issue of Syrian relations with the Soviet Union. Syrian leaders themselves avow that the grounds of their agreement with the USSR extend far beyond the conflict with Israel. As a Syrian newspaper commentary noted in 1980, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation which has anchored the two governments' recent relationship has created a "strategic alliance between the two great forces of socialism and national liberation." So close are Syrian-Soviet ties that other commentaries call them "a bright point in the region's sky" and "an example to be emulated in relations among countries."

Syrian leaders consistently and closely identify with Soviet goals. Syria is one of very few states that freely chose to vote at the United Nations in favor of Soviet troops in Afghanistan; more generally, it has concurred with the USSR on every significant issue facing the General Assembly in recent years. By contrast, Syria has termed NATO maneuvers in the Mediterranean "provocative" and has seen them as preparations for "war and aggression."

Syria supports all the causes of the Soviet bloc. Two small examples: not long ago, a high-ranking North Korean official brought a message from Kim Il-Sung thanking Syria for its "constant support for the Korean people's just struggle to reunite their homeland." An August 1985 cable from Assad to Fidel Castro on the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Syria and Cuba praised the two countries' friendship as beneficial "for the two peoples in their joint struggle against world imperialism and its allies." A telegram from the Syrian foreign minister on the same occasion expressed "Syria's admiration for the fraternal Cuban people's great achievements and their firm stands against imperialist aggression on the Latin American people."

In turn, Syria's cause receives support from the whole Soviet bloc, worded in each case almost identically. During the missile crisis of 1981, when an appeal went out from Damascus to "world Communist and labor parties and progressive forces" to denounce American plans of hegemony and Israeli aggression, those appealed to responded resoundingly and univocally.

Visits, delegations, and agreements are by no means restricted to the USSR. To take a single month as an example, during October 1983 one cooperative agreement was signed by Syria with each of Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, and Poland, and two with Rumania. Five delegations were exchanged: North Koreans, Poles, and two groups of Soviets to Syria, Syrians to East Germany. Five publicized high-level visits took place, including trips by the Soviet chief of staff to Damascus and by Assad to Moscow.

Mongolians, Bulgarians, Cambodians, Angolans —the whole range of the Communist international —have visited the Assad government. Grenada's Communist politicians during their brief rule found time to get to Syria; on leaving, they affirmed that Syria's "courageous stand" against imperialism was backed by "all the world's progressive forces." Babrak Karmal of Afghanistan missed no occasion when he was in power to send fraternal greetings to the Syrian masses. Even Communist parties in the opposition, such as those of Greece, Italy, and Chile, show up in Damascus, where they are sure to find a glad hand and a night's lodging. In return, Syrian representatives attend Communist party congresses in Vietnam and elsewhere. In the Middle East, Communist parties such as those of Saudi Arabia and Iraq are closely aligned with Damascus. (Nearly all Middle East countries ban and persecute the Communist party, but in Syria the party is an element in the ruling coalition.)

Syria and the Soviet Union agree on most issues in the Middle East—given the obvious difference that the former has a regional perspective and the latter a global one. Both felt betrayed by Sadat, both condemn the U.S.-sponsored "peace process," both seek to destroy the pro-Western orientation of Lebanon, both want a high price for oil. The differences that do exist—over Iraq or Yasir Arafat, for instance—are considerable, but they are well within the bounds of what allies can tolerate, and far less troublesome than, say, the differences between the United States and the members of NATO. What is more important, the two countries' strategic interests coincide, for both oppose the United States and also the pro-American governments of the Middle East.

ON THE military level, Syria acquires over 90 percent of its weapons, some of them extremely advanced, from the Soviet Union. Its armed forces have 650 Soviet combat aircraft and nearly 4,000 tanks. SA-11's and SA-13's give Syria the most sophisticated and densest Soviet-supplied air-defense system outside the USSR. Syrian SS-21's are capable of reaching most of Israel's population centers and military installations. Delivery in 1985 of an undisclosed number of naval vessels, including patrol boats, attack submarines, and STYX and SEPAL antiship missiles, heralded a major Syrian naval expansion. U.S. and Israeli military intelligence predict that in the course of 1986, Syria will receive MIG-29's, the most sophisticated Soviet aircraft outside the USSR. In a very important development, Syrian technicians have recently taken full control of the SA-5 system installed by the Soviets in early 1983, though 4,000 Soviets remain to perform other tasks, more than in any other Third World country. In all, Syria has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contracted for $19 billion in Soviet military hardware.

The presence of such advanced weaponry in Syria—where it is exposed to close intelligence-gathering efforts by the U.S. and Israel—indicates Moscow's commitment to Syria. Soviet leaders so trust the durability of the alliance with Syria that two Syrians have recently begun training as cosmonauts; with this, Syria joins Cuba, Mongolia, Vietnam, and India in the privilege of engaging in a "fraternal" space flight.

Defense Minister Mustafa Talas speaks of acquiring Soviet nuclear weapons. He disclosed in an October 1985 interview that if Israel resorted to nuclear arms, "we have a guarantee from the Soviet Union that we will have enough means to deter the aggression and the Soviet Union will put nuclear means in our hands." Talas then boasted: "We in Syria have enough courage to press the button." Other sources quote Talas as saying that "the USSR is moving toward supplying Syria with nuclear weapons" and that the USSR is actually training Syrians to handle nuclear weapons. Although there is reason to doubt Talas's claims—he is well-known for bombast—they may indicate that steps in this direction have begun.

In addition to this vast arsenal, Syria has also imported the Soviet military style. For over twenty years, virtually all Syrians sent abroad for military training have gone to the Soviet bloc and all foreign instructors have come from there. A Soviet-style "political department" assures ideological homogeneity among Syrian soldiers and officers. In addition to the usual army, navy, and air force, the Syrian military includes a fourth service, the Air Defense Command, patterned on the Soviet Troops of Air Defense. The command structure, which used to be patterned on that of France, now resembles that of the USSR. Some uniforms, such as army combat clothing, have been changed to resemble Soviet models.

Adopting Soviet structures means adopting Soviet methods, too; like their Soviet counterparts, the Syrian armed forces rely on centralized decision-making, numerical superiority, and offensive tactics. One demonstration of this occurred in October 1973 when, according to the authoritative *World Armies,* the Syrian attack on Israel "slavishly followed Soviet tactical doctrine without the resources and reserves to justify such an all-out offensive strategy, and indeed without the political need to pursue such a strategy."

In emergencies, Soviet personnel have taken over military operations within Syria. During the 1973 war, the headquarters staff of a Soviet airborne division was reportedly flown to Damascus to prepare for the defense of the city. When Syria needed military help in 1973 and 1974, Cuba provided tank operators, MIG pilots, and helicopter pilots.* Soviet pilots apparently operated a reconnaissance squadron of MIG-25's in 1976-77.

The Soviet Union also supplies Assad with internal protection. In mid-1980, at the peak of a revolt by the Muslim Brotherhood, 500 KGB advisers were located at an army base south of Damascus to train Syrian intelligence officers. Other Syrians went to the USSR for similar training. In 1982, a few days after rebellion erupted in the city of Hama, the chief of Syrian internal security, 'Ali Duba, requested help from the Soviets. Twelve Soviet officers, experts in street fighting, went to Hama, where three of them were killed.

THE USSR derives many benefits from its close relations with Damascus. In particular, Syria provides an eastern Mediterranean base, an air-defense link, and an agency for terrorism.

Soviet troops and equipment are both located in Syria in significant numbers. Soviet submarines operating in the Mediterranean are based primarily at Tartus, and their naval airplanes have access to the Tiyas field. SA-5's, surface-to-sea missiles, and Soviet aircraft in Syria cover significant portions of Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean, endangering the U.S. Sixth Fleet and NATO forces in those regions. Syria also offers the Soviets a pivotal location from which to involve itself in other parts of the Middle East, such as the Persian Gulf.

The air-defense network in Syria is linked electronically to stations in the USSR and to Soviet ships in the Mediterranean, making Syria an integral part of the Soviet security apparatus. The Soviets have "hands-on" control of air activity based in Syria; according to a U.S. intelligence source (quoted in the Los Angeles *Times*), "all of the radar data, missile-readiness status, interceptor-aircraft conditions—such as fuel and armaments—and other battle information that is fed into central command posts in Syria will also be displayed for Soviet generals in the Soviet Union via space-relay transmissions."

Finally, Syria serves as perhaps the most crucial link in the Soviet Union's global network of terrorism. Almost every significant group operating in the Middle East or Western Europe has a connection to Syria, as do some groups from other regions as well. These connections are made either through the provision of training facilities or through cooperation with Libya and Iran.

The Syrian government, which controls most of Lebanon, exploits its freedom in that country to sponsor a variety of terrorist organizations using training facilities in the Bekaa Valley. These include a large number of Palestinian groups, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), the Popular Front for the

* Revealingly, the Cuban brigadier general who commanded those soldiers showed up in Nicaragua a few months ago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Liberation of Oman, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Somalia, and the Eritrean Liberation Front. Mehmet Ali Agca, the Pope's assailant, testified at his trial in Rome that he and other members of the Grey Wolves, an extremist Turkish gang, were trained in Latakia, Syria, and taught by Bulgarian and Czech experts. Most Iranian-backed fundamentalist Muslim terrorists —whose attacks take place anywhere between Copenhagen and Kuwait—work out of Lebanon.

A number of European terrorists, including members of the Baader Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades, have spent time in Syrian-controlled Lebanese camps. Agca has said that he trained alongside gangs from France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Press accounts have repeatedly connected Syrian leaders with "Carlos," the phantom international terrorist. Further afield, such extremist groups as the Tamil United Liberation Front of Sri Lanka and the Moro National Liberation Front of the Philippines, have received training and aid from Syria.

To extend his reach, Assad often coordinates with Libya, Iran, or both. The two countries have a license to make mischief in Lebanon, and both sponsor organizations in collaboration with Damascus. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, headed by Ahmed Jibril, receives support from Syria and Libya. ASALA and the Abu Nidal gang appear to receive help from all participants in this anti-American triad. Little terrorism takes place in the Middle East without some connection to Damascus; and almost all of it serves Soviet ends.

For all these reasons, the Department of Defense was right to conclude that "the Syrian-Soviet relationship remains the centerpiece of Soviet Middle East policy," and Defense Secretary Weinberger was right to call Syria "just another outpost of the Soviet Union."

III

ANOTHER indicator of the Syrian position in international politics is its Soviet-style hostility to the United States. According to Damascus, the U.S. pursues a "general strategy of world imperialism" in a "colonialist" effort to control economic resources.* Its goal in the Middle East is to set up military bases for two reasons: to "tighten" control over the oil regions and to threaten the Soviet Union.

Syrian media discern an American hand behind many of the region's troubles. According to them, Washington "sent the U.S. war machine to kill Palestinians and Lebanese citizens. It undertook a fascist military adventure against the Iranian revolution and then instigated Saddam's regime [in Iraq] to wage a war on its behalf against the Iranian revolution." President Assad reminds Syrians that the goal of all this is "to occupy our territory and exploit our masses," rendering the Arabs nothing but "puppets" and "slaves."

The United States is seen by Syria to have its own goals in the Middle East—"imperialist hegemony over the Arab homeland"—and support of Israel is regarded not as a cause but as a consequence. Israel, indeed, has no real autonomy; the U.S. can order Israel to do its bidding. Syria's prime minister says that "Israel is a U.S. base," Assad calls it an American "tool," and the newspaper *Tishrin* terms it the "big stick" of the United States. Israel's "expansionism" serves to soften up the Arabs, to discourage them, and render them ready to capitulate to American wishes. "It has become obvious," a Syrian daily concludes, "that the Zionist entity implements aggressive and expansionist action in the region only after total agreement with the U.S. administration." In Syrian parlance, Zionism is but a symptom of imperialism, and they are "two sides of one coin"; if the American influence in the Middle East could be eliminated, the Israeli challenge would be greatly reduced, if not ended.

Ironically, Syrian leaders understand Israel's value to the United States better than do many Americans. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam explains: "There is a deep and organic link between the United States and Israel. We are under no illusions about this. The link is not due to the 'Zionist lobby' in the United States but to the fact that it is the only friend of the United States in the area and because it represents a major base for protecting U.S. interests." True, this formula is sometimes turned around when Syrian leaders hope to affect American policy; then they speak of a conspiracy carried out by "world Zionism." But in any case there is no argument from Syria—as there is, say, from Saudi Arabia—that the U.S. is backing the wrong side in the Middle East.

Syrian leaders sharply disagree with those who see the main Arab problem as Zionism. "No matter how skillful Washington is in maneuvering and applying pressures, it will not succeed in convincing the Arabs that Israel [instead of the U.S.] is the one which occupies Arab territories." After the 1982 conflict in Lebanon, the Syrian prime minister stressed that "the war was not merely between Syria and Israel, but between Syria and those behind Israel." The U.S., not Israel, is the "essence of evil." Assad has been quoted as saying that "the United States is the primary enemy," and Syrian leaders imply that an agreement between Syria and Israel is ultimately impossible not

* As with all Soviet-backed regimes, the question arises as to how much the leadership believes its own rhetoric. Three observations are pertinent in this regard: constant repetition has an effect on both speaker and hearer; the rulers almost certainly feel a genuine need to justify their actions; and Damascus's behavior is consistent with these public statements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because of the dispute over the Palestinians or other local issues but because of the role Israel plays as an agent for the United States.

In the Syrian view, Israel is by no means the only American lackey in the Middle East. The revolt by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1980 was similarly blamed on American agents: "The weapons are Israeli, the ammunition from Sadat, the training is Jordanian, and the moral support is from other parties well known for their loyalty to imperialism." More recently, the Syrians identified a "reactionary axis" of Arabs working for the U.S.—Yasir Arafat, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. To these are sometimes added Somalia, Sudan, and Oman.

The language against these purported clients can become wildly abusive, resembling Muammar al-Qaddafi's. A radio commentary of January 1981 accused "the gang of CIA agents in Amman"—i.e., the Jordanian monarchy—of foisting on Jordanian citizens "the cud of all the byproducts of the Zionist and imperialist psychological war machine." When Anwar al-Sadat was killed, Syrian radio broadcast a speech celebrating the event and calling for the death of other Arab "traitors," including King Hussein of Jordan and Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The Arabs, according to Syria, face a stark choice: either "submit to a hostile United States or choose a strategic alliance with the friendly Soviet Union." Syrian rhetoric discounts the possibility that the Arabs can stand up to the "U.S. onslaught" alone, but Syrian leaders are proud to see themselves in the vanguard of the "struggle against U.S. domination of the Middle East," and they welcome the special American enmity that this entails.

The Assad government, having rejected Camp David, is a proper object of Washington's anger: "The United States is directing all its psychological, economic, political, and diplomatic resources for war against Syria, using all its agents, hirelings, lackeys, and mercenaries." In response, Syrian rulers from time to time explicitly threaten the United States, as when the prime minister asserted in 1980, "If I were able to strike at Washington, I would do so." A 1982 newspaper editorial called on the Arabs "to strike at every type of U.S. interest, to behead the snake." These threats are not idle. There have been repeated attacks against American soldiers and diplomats, perhaps the most spectacular being the Katyusha artillery rocket barrage in May 1983 on Secretary of State Shultz as he spent the night in the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Beirut.

A leading Syrian politician observed in 1980 that "the United States is the United States whether Carter goes or Reagan comes," while another commentary noted that "the departure of one person [as President of the U.S.] and the arrival of another will make no difference." In short, the Syrian leadership contends that its conflict with the United States results from structural reasons, and will continue indefinitely.

IV

SYRIA's position is reflected not only in its policy vis-à-vis the great powers, but in its behavior toward neighboring countries.

Expansionist states around the world look to the USSR for support of aggression against their neighbors, and Syria is no exception. Just as the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, so Vietnam attacked Cambodia, Libya attacked Chad, Nicaragua attacked El Salvador, North Korea has designs on South Korea—and Damascus, conforming to the pattern in spades, has hostile relations with all five of its neighbors and also aims to dominate the PLO. With regard to four of those neighbors —Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey—Syrian ambitions fit in well with Soviet policies.

The Syrian intent of "liquidating the Zionist presence" has great value to Moscow. If Assad did not keep the Arab conflict with Israel alive militarily, this might turn into a diplomatic dispute, and then the Soviet role in the Middle East would greatly diminish, for the USSR has little to offer anyone besides arms. Moscow, in other words, relies on Syrian intransigence toward Israel to maintain its place in Middle East politics.

And the Syrian government *is* intransigent, rejecting any accommodation to Israel's existence, either by its own citizens or by other Arabs. "The most hostile" of Israel's neighbors (according to Israel's Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin), Syria led the opposition to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1979 and worked against Jordanian acceptance of the 1982 Reagan Plan. It forced the Lebanese government to abrogate the May 1983 agreement with Israel and split the PLO when Arafat showed interest in negotiations in early 1983.

Assad defines his goal as "strategic parity" with Israel, so that Syria can take on Israel in a one-to-one confrontation. Toward this end, he has increased the regular Syrian army from fewer than 300,000 troops in mid-1982 to 500,000 today, and the number of divisions from six to nine. While this ambition is deadly serious, there is another, and usually overlooked, purpose to the Syrian military build-up. Attaining parity with Israel, the strongest state in the region, translates into decisive power over Jordan and the other Arab states, as well as the PLO.

As Secretary of State Shultz recently noted in congressional testimony, "Syria holds major quantitative advantages over Jordan in personnel (5 to 1), tanks (4 to 1), armored personnel carriers (2.5 to 1), artillery (4 to 1), and combat aircraft (5 to 1)." Assad uses this strength to intimidate the Jordanian government. Syrian troops are deployed along the Jordanian border in times of crisis and sometimes sent into action. In December 1980, Syrian jets attacked locations in central Jordan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with impunity. At other times, Assad provided aid to anti-government elements within Jordan, for example encouraging a group of officers in July 1985 to stage a coup d'état.

Assad has succeeded in extending Syria's hold to most of the territory of Lebanon. This process began in the early 1970's and received a boost with the outbreak of Lebanon's civil war in 1975. In June 1976, Syrian forces entered Lebanon, establishing control over most of the country. Damascus is at present attempting to bring the remaining portions of Lebanon under its dominion.

Notwithstanding its initial opposition to Syrian expansion into Lebanon, the Soviet Union gains from it in several ways. First, this opens Lebanon to Soviet encroachment; delegations of up to a dozen Soviet military officers have been sighted as far from Syria as Shuwayr, just sixteen miles outside Beirut. Second, as has been noted, a wide range of pro-Soviet terrorist groups receive training in the regions under Syrian control, especially the Bekaa Valley. Finally, Damascus supports a coalition of pro-Soviet forces gaining power in Lebanon.

With respect to Syria's northern neighbor, Turkey, Damascus makes trouble in a number of small ways. It encourages agitation in Hatay, a province of Turkey that borders on Syria and is shown on official Syrian maps as part of Syria. The government also lays claim to other parts of Turkey. In 1980, Foreign Minister Khaddam reminded the Turks that 54,000 square miles—an area larger than England—had been "usurped" from Syria by Turkey. Syria disputes Turkey's right to control its river waters. As noted earlier, Damascus supports the terrorist Grey Wolves and ASALA, an organization that guns down Turkish diplomats around the world. All these activities threatening Turkish security are clearly welcome to the leaders of the Warsaw Pact.

By contrast, Syrian hostility toward the PLO and Iraq—which complicates Soviet diplomacy and weakens the anti-American front—must surely annoy the Soviet leaders. But even here, Syrian aggressiveness brings benefits. When Damascus calls Yasir Arafat a "deviationist" and a "U.S. tool" for even considering negotiations with Israel, this reinforces parallel Soviet pressures. So does the accusation that Arafat has fallen into "a swamp of treason [and] capitulation" and adopted "conspiratorial methods against the Palestine question." As for recent joint PLO-Jordanian diplomacy, when President Assad called Arafat and King Hussein "the staunchest agents of imperialism and Zionism," his declaration exactly fit Soviet purposes.

V

STILL another indication of Syria's affinity with the Soviet Union is the nature of its internal regime. Just as the democracies are the only true, long-term allies of the United States, so the Soviet Union develops its deepest ties with totalitarian governments. That the Assad years have witnessed a turn away from authoritarianism (government control of politics) and toward totalitarianism (government control of everything) in Syria is apparent from changes that have occurred in the economic, social, and cultural realms. Although the Syrian government still lacks the all-encompassing institutions of state control of the USSR, the trend is clearly in that direction.

The Syrian economy has come increasingly under bureaucratic jurisdiction. In agriculture, the government has reduced the proportion of private farms from 82 percent in 1972 to 66 percent in 1982, while increasing the proportion of state-controlled cooperatives. In manufacturing, the state owns all of what are called "strategic industries." Besides the obvious ones, this includes such enterprises as sugar refining and wool spinning. Attendant on this have been Soviet-style inefficiency, a drop in quality, and maldistribution of goods.

Assad gains direct influence over many Syrians by having them work for him. Civilian employment by the government rose from 12 percent of total employment in 1973 to 22 percent in 1983. Growth in military employment has been even more dramatic, rising from 6 percent of adult males in 1968 to 15 percent in 1982.

As in most Soviet-bloc countries, Syria's leaders devote an extraordinary proportion of their country's resources to military strength. According to highly-placed officials, the Syrian government earmarked 60 percent of its budget for military expenditures in 1980, 70 percent in 1981, and 60 percent in 1986. Outside sources estimate this to be 30 percent of the country's GNP. Such expenditures give the Syrian military a prominence that matches its Soviet counterpart. Its activities permeate the country's life. The military, for example, freely requisitions land and material resources, interferes in private life via the intelligence services, takes up large portions of the school day for pre-military training, and owns one-third of the motor vehicles in Syria. When we add this to the "strategic industries" and the vast resources devoted to military power, the picture emerges of a society dominated by Soviet-style militarism.

To offset the economic burden, Syria receives a large percentage of Soviet-bloc economic aid, with the USSR providing about half and the states of Eastern Europe the other half. This money mostly goes for infrastructure projects such as railroads, ports, dams, land reclamation, and oil refineries. It is spent in such a way as to assure Soviet-style control of the economy as well as dependence on Soviet parts and technicians. Over 1,000 Soviet economic advisers work in Syria. Unofficial estimates place the debt to the USSR at $14 billion.

Soviet-style media have emerged in Assad's Syria. Soviet movies and television programs are ubiquitous (although they never attract an audi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ence if an alternative is available). In its official pronouncements, Damascus uses boiler-plate leftist language with the numbing regularity of all Soviet-bloc regimes. According to the *World Press Encyclopedia*, the Syrian press, "like the nation, speaks with one voice, . . . a de-facto state-mobilized press exists." The same reference work points out that the two leading papers, *Ath-Thawra* and *Al-Baath*, published respectively by the Ministry of Information and the Baath party, serve as the *Izvestia* and *Pravda* of Syria.

Foreign journalists find that, as in the Soviet bloc, citizens are afraid to talk to them about politics. But the Syrian regime has gone farther than the Soviet prototype in that it forbids Western journalists to take up residence in Syria. This means that they are prevented from cultivating personal contacts, and must rely almost entirely on official sources. Following Soviet practice, even the most innocuous military information is deemed a state secret.

THE similarities to the Soviet Union do not end with this, however, but extend to the repression of citizens. Like all Soviet-bloc regimes, Syria disregards the rule of law, controls speech, persecutes religion, and engages in torture. Reports of brutality are numerous. The day after an attempt on Assad's life in July 1980, 600 to 1,000 political prisoners held in a jail in Palmyra were massacred. According to an eyewitness, the prisoners were lined up against walls and machine-gunned to death; in reward, each of the soldiers engaged in the massacre was given 100 Syrian pounds.

The regime's violence has been greatest in the city of Hama, which was three times the scene of massacres—in April 1980, April 1981, and February 1982. The last occasion was the largest-scale massacre of civilians in the Middle East in many years; 12,000 troops attacked opposition strongholds with field artillery, tanks, and air-force helicopters, killing about 24,000 citizens. In addition, 6,000 soldiers lost their lives and most of the 10,000 inhabitants of Hama who were jailed then disappeared. In all, one-tenth of Hama's population died.

Amnesty International's report on Syria in 1983 stated:

> Syrian security forces have practiced systematic violations of human rights, including torture and political killings, and have been operating with impunity under the country's emergency laws. There is overwhelming evidence that thousands of Syrians not involved in violence have been harassed and wrongfully detained without chance of appeal and in some cases have been tortured; others are reported to have "disappeared" or to have been the victims of extrajudicial killings carried out by the security forces.

The U.S. Department of State concurs. Its annual review of human-rights practices regularly points to Syrian government offenses. In 1983 it reported that the authorities "pursued dissident elements, carried out cordon-and-search operations without judicial safeguards against invasion of the home, carried out arrests, in many cases causing persons to 'disappear,' and engaged in torture and other brutal practices." More recently, the State Department has noted that "while the more public forms of repression have diminished . . . , there have been no indications of a trend toward a more open political system or greater respect for the integrity of the person." Stalin's methods, in other words, have been replaced by Brezhnev's.

Although the Syrian government denies these accusations, it publicly celebrates brutality. For example, in October 1983 (according to a report in the Jerusalem *Post*), Syrian television showed

> sixteen-year-old girls—trainees in the Syrian Baath party militia—fondling live snakes as President Hafez Assad and other Syrian leaders looked on approvingly. Martial music reached a crescendo as the girls suddenly bit the snakes with their teeth, repeatedly tore off flesh and spat it out as blood ran down their chins. As the leaders applauded, the girls then attached the snakes to sticks and grilled them over the fire, eating them triumphantly.

After this, militiamen "strangled puppies and drank their blood." Such demonstrations are clearly intended to send a message to the regime's domestic opponents.

These internal developments are not in themselves unusual in the Middle East or in the Third World, nor do they require close ties to the Soviet Union. But when combined with the other manifestations we have examined, they contribute in an important way to the regime's overall Soviet orientation.

VI

THERE is one prominent anomaly in Hafez al-Assad's pattern of alignment with the Soviet Union: the Syrian government has repeatedly helped return American hostages —or their remains—from the Middle East. On five separate occasions since 1983, Assad has gone out of his way to make this gesture. The acting president of the American University of Beirut, David Dodge, was released from a year's captivity with Syrian assistance. Syrian forces shot down U.S. Navy pilot Lieutenant Robert O. Goodman over Lebanon on December 4, 1983, and released him a month later. Jeremy Levin, a correspondent for CNN, escaped his Lebanese captors by fleeing to Syrian-controlled territory, from where he was returned to the U.S. During the hijacking of a TWA plane in June 1985, the Syrian government positioned itself as an intermediary between the United States and the Shiite radicals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And finally, when the body of Leon Klinghoffer, the invalid killed on the *Achille Lauro*, washed up on the Syrian coast, it was immediately turned over to American authorities. In addition, Damascus has offered to help win the freedom of American hostages still being held in Lebanon.

While Assad has undeniably been helpful, however, three considerations diminish the political significance of his acts. First, in many of these cases the regime played a double game. David Dodge was abducted with Syrian complicity, for how else could he have been taken from Beirut to Iran? In the effort to win release of the TWA passengers, Assad stressed his solidarity with the hostage holders ("We stand with them firmly, and they admit our support is basic"), but appealed for the release of the hostages on tactical grounds: holding the Americans was counterproductive because it might provoke the United States to a major strike in Lebanon. In the Jeremy Levin case, Damascus first said that it had won Levin's release through negotiations, only to retract this claim later when the falsehood became evident.

Second, these acts are transparent attempts to improve Assad's image. The White House had to issue a statement that the U.S. was "grateful" to Assad and his brother for their "humanitarian" efforts on David Dodge's behalf. Lieutenant Goodman was delivered to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a presidential candidate at the time and a leading critic of the U.S. policy of confronting Syria. By getting involved in a U.S. political campaign, Assad garnered enormously favorable publicity. Though the Syrian government lied about its role in Jeremy Levin's escape, President Reagan nevertheless called Assad to express his gratitude and a State Department spokesman thanked Damascus for its "positive role" in this affair. And Syrian help with the TWA hijacking was rewarded when President Reagan omitted Syria from his list of states that sponsor terrorism; as a ranking White House aide explained, "Obviously you don't return a favor with harsh language."

These efforts have had a wide effect: many Americans view the Syrian regime as one not unfriendly to the United States and very few associate it with terrorism. According to a New York *Times*/CBS News poll taken in February 1986, whereas 29 percent of Americans associate Libya with state-sponsored terrorism, Syria is mentioned by a mere 3 percent.

Third, Syria's promise to help gain the release of the remaining American hostages in Lebanon effectively prevents the United States from confronting Syria. David Dodge was freed just when Washington was most angry about Syrian rejection of the U.S.-arranged accord between Israel and Lebanon. Assad released Lieutenant Goodman to prevent further Navy attacks on his positions. Damascus placed itself as an intermediary between the United States and the Shiite radicals who held the TWA airliner in order to prevent an American attack. Most recently, proof of Syrian responsibility for terrorist actions in London and Berlin sparked a flurry of Syrian efforts on behalf of kidnapped Americans in Lebanon.

Syrian mediation is taken so seriously that such high-ranking officials as Vernon Walters, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, have gone to Damascus to discuss the hostages with President Assad. Whispered promises of help from Assad subvert the possibility of U.S. sanctions against Syria. (This partially explains why Libya's role in the massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports was played up, while Syria's role was ignored.)

Though certainly welcome in a small way, the help Assad provides must be seen for what it is: a public-relations gesture which at no cost to himself aims to confuse American opinion about the true relations of the two states and undercuts strong measures by the U.S. government. This minor matter should not obscure the damage Assad does to American objectives—no more than the release of Anatoly Shcharansky should alter one's understanding of Soviet goals.

IN THE END, the confusion that exists about Syria's true position has less to do with hostages than with a habit of seeing the country exclusively in terms of Middle East politics, and in particular in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But once we extract Syria from the regional issues of the Middle East and view it through the prism of international relations, we see the plain truth that Syria is the leading Soviet ally and the outstanding U.S. enemy in the Middle East. It deserves to be acknowledged as such, and the knowledge deserves to be acted upon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Petropower and Soviet Expansion

Edward Jay Epstein

THE constant focus on the attitudes of individual Soviet leaders, measured by their public pronouncements, style, and degree of apparent enlightenment, obscures the extent to which Soviet foreign policy depends on an underlying economic reality: the world price of a barrel of oil.

To maintain over 150,000 technicians in 76 countries, constructing everything from oil refineries and nuclear reactors to SAM anti-aircraft missile systems, the Soviet Union must either earn or borrow substantial amounts of foreign exchange.* In 1985, for example, the Soviet Union provided foreign military and economic aid estimated at more than $20 billion (not including the covert assistance it funneled to a score of guerrilla movements). In 1985, it could afford to undertake foreign activities of this magnitude because it exported the equivalent of 1.7 billion barrels of oil in petroleum and natural-gas products —a quantity which made it, not Saudi Arabia, the world's leading producer and exporter of energy.

Since the world oil price averaged just under $30 a barrel that year, the Soviet Union, even with these expansive undertakings, had a foreign-exchange surplus. If, on the other hand, falling oil prices had deprived the Soviet Union of this revenue from its energy exports, it would not even have had sufficient foreign exchange to finance its own food imports and to service its $20.4 billion foreign debt.

In other words, there is a powerful relationship between Soviet oil revenues and the foreign exchange it has available for its global activities. The Soviets could of course make up any shortfall in their foreign-exchange account by borrowing from the West, as they have done in the past. But the seeking of Western credit on favorable terms often requires a moderation—if only a temporary one—in Soviet foreign designs.

THE Soviet foreign-exchange bind traces back to the Bolshevik Revolution. With most of its gold and foreign reserves seized by the Allies in 1917, the Soviet Union was virtually paralyzed. It could not obtain credits abroad to purchase drilling bits to reopen its oil fields, fertilizers to save its crops, or spare parts to keep its trucks on the road. As far as its foreign activities went, it had to resort to clandestine sales of art and national treasure to finance its Communist International (Comintern) apparatus and diamond smuggling to support its diplomats. It even permitted its intelligence service to sell secret documents—both phony and real—to anti-Communist exile groups throughout the 1920's.

Confronted with this desperate situation, and the need for foreign credit, Lenin moved to scale down and moderate the more aggressive aspects of Soviet foreign policy. To expedite obtaining financial credits from the West, he even suspended the central Bolshevik principle of advancing world revolution. When Britain threatened to cancel trade negotiations because of Soviet aid to revolutionaries in Afghanistan and India, Lenin agreed publicly to end propaganda aimed at the British empire. To make this new policy more credible to British intelligence, orders were subsequently sent to Soviet embassies calling off subversive activities, in diplomatic codes which Soviet intelligence knew the British were intercepting—and reading.

To recruit American capital to Russia, Lenin radically revised "War Communism" to allow private capitalism a place in the Soviet economy. Under his "New Economic Policy" (NEP), he sent representatives to the United States to encourage businessmen to invest in "concessions" in the Soviet Union from which they were promised large profits. The offer attracted some 350 foreign companies, resulting in a much-needed infusion of equipment and technology—all financed by Western credits—during the 1920's.

To acquire technology and equipment from Germany, not only did Lenin cut off aid to German revolutionary organizations, but the Kremlin entered into a secret arrangement with the

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN is completing a book on international deception. His articles in COMMENTARY include "Who Killed the CIA?" (October 1985) and "Disinformation: Or, Why the CIA Cannot Verify an Arms-Control Agreement" (July 1982).

* The only really determined effort to estimate these Soviet costs was made in September 1983, in a study for the Director of Net Assessment in the Pentagon by Charles Wolf, Jr., K.C. Yeh, Edmund Brunner, Jr., Aaron Gurwitz, and Marilee Lawrence. See *The Costs of the Soviet Empire*, Rand Corporation, 1983.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

German government allowing it to rearm in the Soviet Union. Although prohibited by the Versailles peace treaty from having any real military forces, the Germans covertly organized and trained their armored divisions and air force over the plains of Russia. The German general staff also manufactured in Russia vast quantities of banned armaments, including tanks, aircraft, poison gas, battleships, and submarines. The 150 million Reichmarks a year the Soviet Union received from this deal—which accounted for a third of the German military budget—financed a substantial portion of Soviet activities abroad in the 1920's. (The unforeseen part of this unconventional arrangement was that many of the same German armored divisions that trained in Kazan in the late 1920's would return as invaders in 1941.)

By the late 1920's, Soviet oil production from the Baku fields had been largely restored, and exports of oil, as well as of timber and agricultural commodities, had largely alleviated the foreign-exchange crisis. Its trade relations with the West normalized, the Soviet Union could afford a more expansive foreign policy. It resumed—and escalated—covert support of subversive groups in India, Afghanistan, and elsewhere; confiscated, without compensation, almost all the foreign concessions it had awarded; and dismantled most of the German military apparatus on its territory (though pilot training continued until 1932).

The onset of the great depression, which extinguished most of the markets for Soviet exports in Europe and America, ended this brief period. During the 1930's Stalin not only abandoned the rhetoric of world revolution under the slogan "Socialism in One Country," but adopted a policy of accommodation toward, if not outright appeasement of, potential enemies. When the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 threatened the Soviet-owned Chinese Eastern railroad, Stalin, rather than resisting, sold the railroad to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo and arranged a nonaggression pact with Japan. In 1932 alone, the Soviet Union signed nonaggression treaties with Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and France. (Subsequently it invaded all these nations, except for France, and annexed part or all of their territory.) In 1933, in return for American recognition, Stalin pledged that the Soviet Union, directly or indirectly, would refrain from any subversive acts against "the political or social order of the whole or any part of the United States." Despite Hitler's stated goal of destroying the Comintern, Stalin concluded a nonaggression treaty with Nazi Germany in 1939, and proceeded to profit handsomely for the next two years from surcharges on goods transshipped across Russia to evade the Allied blockade. Then, after being attacked by Germany, Stalin allied himself with the United States and England. In return for massive lend-lease shipments from the United States, Stalin agreed to dissolve the Comintern itself—which, since Lenin, had embodied the aim of overthrowing capitalism.

After the war, with its economy in a shambles, the Soviet Union itself desperately needed foreign help. Although the Allies did not accede to Stalin's demand for massive reparations from Germany and Japan, he expropriated from Eastern Europe and Manchuria vast quantities of capital goods—including entire factories, railroads, and shipyards. Until Stalin's death in 1953, not only did the Soviet Union furnish virtually no substantial foreign aid to non-Communist nations, but it effectively extorted aid from its allies through distorted barter arrangements.

Stalin's successors, confronted with increasing unrest in Eastern Europe in the mid-50's, could not divert substantial resources to overseas adventures. In 1954 they even found it necessary to cut off further economic credits to Communist China. Indeed, much of the subsequent tension with China proceeded from the Soviet Union's decision to use its scarce foreign exchange to strengthen itself at the expense of its Communist allies during this period.

In the late 1950's, Khrushchev attempted to change the direction of foreign aid by supplying Eastern Europe with increased quantities of oil and gas from newly-developed fields in the Ural Mountains. He also initiated a number of dramatic foreign-aid enterprises designed to compete directly with the West. The most notable of these projects was the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt.

Khrushchev's pledge to undertake this project in 1958 flowed not from any ongoing foreign-aid program—the Soviets had not then even created an administration for disbursing economic aid—but from a unique opportunity to gain entry into the Middle East. In 1956, after the United States and Britain abruptly withdrew their offer to build the Aswan Dam, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal and, by doing so, precipitated a brief war with England and France. With anti-Western feelings running at fever pitch, Khrushchev stepped into the vacuum, and offered the Egyptian government what it vitally needed to restore its credibility: financing for the dam. The Soviets, after two years of hard negotiations, were willing to lend the Egyptians only about one-quarter of the amount necessary to build the dam. The loan was presumably to be paid back through the cotton and other agricultural products that the Soviets were already importing from Egypt. (As it turned out, however, the Egyptian goods were insufficient to repay the loan and, not without irony, the large shortfall was made up from surplus American wheat Egypt received from the United States in the 1960's.) Despite the public-relations coup involved in building the dam, Khrushchev at the time of his removal in 1964 came under criticism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for his decision to provide these much-needed resources to a non-Communist country.

Whatever its net assessment of Khrushchev's grand ventures abroad, the new Soviet leadership moved to downgrade foreign aid to the role of stimulating markets for Soviet exports (especially weapons). This lower profile also fit in with the theme of détente in the late 1960's. Under Brezhnev, the Soviets again sought to import large amounts of capital from the West on favorable terms in order to develop their oil, gas, and petrochemical industries. To this end, Armand Hammer of Occidental Petroleum (who had been dealing with the Soviet Union since the time of Lenin) persuaded President Nixon to inform the U.S. Export-Import bank that it was in the "national interest" to finance a Soviet pipeline and storage facilities to transport gas between the Ural Mountains and the Black Sea. Consequently, the bank provided the Soviet government with a $182-million low-interest loan—the largest credit ever granted to a Communist country. Less successfully, Hammer also attempted to arrange for the Soviet Union a $4-billion loan from Japan, which was to be used to build a trans-Siberian pipeline. Although it was suggested that the Soviets might even return four islands to Japanese sovereignty to sweeten the deal, it never went through.

The magnitude—and direction—of Soviet foreign aid changed dramatically in the 1970's. From 1953 until 1973, the combined military and economic aid to non-Communist countries supplied by the Soviet Union, which was almost entirely in the form of loans, averaged just under $1 billion a year. In 1974, it leaped to $7 billion; by 1979, it had exceeded $10 billion; and by 1982, it had reached nearly $20 billion. At the same time, the subsidies that the Soviets supplied to the Communist bloc, much of which were readvanced as foreign aid to further Soviet objectives, increased more than tenfold.

This quantum leap in foreign aid was accompanied by a commensurate increase in the willingness of the Soviet Union to confront the West. In Asia, it moved into Afghanistan, funded Vietnam's military domination of Cambodia and Laos, and took over the huge naval and air base at Cam Ranh Bay. In Africa, it provided the military wherewithal to establish and entrench client regimes in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. In the Middle East, it turned the pro-Soviet government in Syria into a formidable regional power, supported Libyan incursions into Chad and Sudan, and became the dominant supplier of weapons for Iran, Iraq, South Yemen, and Algeria. In Latin America, in addition to its continued subsidization of Cuba, it undertook to support anti-American regimes in Nicaragua and Grenada. It even quietly resumed economic aid to China—after a twenty-year hiatus.

This new phase in Soviet expansion was made possible economically in the winter of 1973 by the explosion of world oil prices.

ALTHOUGH Russia has been a major producer of oil since czarist times, its earnings from exports were limited until the early 1970's by a combination of high transportation costs and low world prices. In the 1960's, with oil fetching less than $2 a barrel on the world market, the only real export market was the Communist bloc; and even here, for the most part, the oil was delivered as part of long-term credits that the Soviets had extended to their allies.

Since the Soviets believed, with some justification, that oil prices were being artificially depressed by a cartel of Western oil companies, they attempted to break this control of marketing and refining by offering their own surplus crude at bargain prices to government-owned oil companies in India and Italy—and, in the case of India, by building a refinery to process it. But this strategy, aimed at disrupting the market, only caused the cartel to push the world price even lower. Despite falling prices, the Soviet Union developed new fields in the Urals and Siberia in the 1960's that more than trebled its oil production. By October 1973, it had become the world's largest producer—surpassing both Saudi Arabia and the United States.

The Soviet pricing problem was solved by the wave of oil shocks, beginning in 1973, that collapsed the Western cartel and panicked the market. The first crack in the cartel's solid front actually had come two years earlier in Libya—which had granted a concession to Armand Hammer's Occidental Petroleum, an independent marketer of oil, well outside the cartel's purview. In the negotiations over Libya's share, Hammer agreed to Qaddafi's terms. The Persian Gulf nations, led by Iran, then demanded that the cartel match these terms; this gradually ratcheted up the price to $2.18 a barrel, and weakened the cartel's control over the marketplace.

Then, in October 1973, came the first real shock: the Egyptian and Syrian attack on Israel. The Yom Kippur War was accompanied by the declaration of an embargo by Saudi Arabia and four other Arab producers on the delivery of oil to the United States and other Western nations, which sent prices spiraling upward to $16 a barrel by the end of the year. In the turmoil that followed, the OPEC oil producers effectively nationalized the concessions that had been controlled by the Western cartel and, auctioning off their oil to the highest bidder, turned the oil market into a free-for-all.

The next oil shock came in Iran in 1977, when riots against the Shah closed down that country's oil fields, and prices soared to $30 a barrel. And when in 1980 Iraq invaded Iran, causing another round of frantic buying as Japan and Europe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sought to stockpile oil, prices were driven up to $40 a barrel.

Whether by design or willy nilly, the Soviet Union played a role in the events which had precipitated the 2000-percent rise in the value of its chief export. The policy of undermining the Western cartel, which the Soviet Union had begun a decade earlier in India (if not Suez), was brought to a successful realization by its client state in the Middle East, Libya. As U.S. intelligence learned from its intercepts of the traffic in messages between Tripoli and Moscow during Libyan negotiations with Armand Hammer, the Soviet Union was not uninvolved in the outcome. After the Western cartel's control over prices was weakened, the Soviet Union provided Egypt with the mobile surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank weapons, and canal-bridging equipment that made the Yom Kippur War possible. The Soviet Union also later furnished Iraq with the armaments to invade Iran.

The windfall the Soviet Union received from these oil shocks was immense. It came at a time when the new oil fields in Siberia were coming on stream and raising Soviet oil production from three billion to four-and-one-half-billion barrels a year. By the early 1980's these fields were also producing the equivalent of another billion barrels of oil a year in natural gas. This meant that each one-dollar increase in the price of oil and natural gas—which is loosely pegged to oil—raised the value of the Soviet energy product by some $5.5 billion a year. The oil shocks of the 1970's, which by 1981 had escalated the world price by $37 dollars a barrel, were producing a theoretical profit to the Soviet economy of over $200 billion a year. Such a bonanza would add roughly 10 percent to the Soviet gross national product.

IN TERMS of geopolitical benefits, the inflated oil prices radically improved the Soviet Union's global standing. To begin with, they completely changed its terms of trade with the West. Up until the oil shocks, the Soviet Union had no major product to export to the West, except gold—whose production was limited. Its other exports were mainly luxury goods like caviar, furs, crab meat, and diamonds, which could be dispensed with or embargoed. After 1974, with European nations frenziedly bidding for oil to build their stockpiles, the Soviet Union began increasing its shipments of heating oil and diesel fuel to Europe from its Baltic refineries. By the early 1980's, its annual energy exports to the West rose to over half-a-billion barrels—which included crude as well as gas product—and generated nearly $25 billion in hard currency. This accounted for 80 percent of the Soviet Union's total income. In all, in the decade since the first oil shock, it has been estimated that the Soviet Union has gained over $300 billion in foreign exchange.

This huge transfer payment from West to East, unprecedented in its magnitude, greatly widened the scope of Soviet foreign policy. It not only allowed the Soviet Union to undertake global adventures on a scale that previously would have been inconceivable; it freed Moscow, for the first time since the Revolution, from dependency on non-Communist governments for credit on favorable terms. Moreover, it financed the massive purchase of grains from the West to ameliorate living conditions in the Soviet Union.

Secondly, after the price explosion the Soviet Union gained enormous leverage over its Communist allies through the export of energy. By 1980, it was exporting some 1.3 billion barrels of oil (or its equivalent) a year to Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Vietnam, worth over $40 billion at prevailing world prices. To be sure, the Soviet Union charged its allies only a fraction of the free-market price, which averaged for most of the Communist bloc approximately one-third of the $40-a-barrel price. The difference, which came to over $30 billion, amounted to an annual Soviet subsidy for its allies.

Communist nations are free to resell this oil at world prices, though Moscow presumably expects its allies to use the proceeds for activities that dovetail with its own strategic purposes. Cuba, for example, was allotted 88 million barrels of crude in 1980 which, at $40 a barrel, was worth over $3.5 billion dollars a year (for which it paid in sugar—at a very nominal rate). Cuba resold part of the oil in the free market, earning over $800 million in hard currency which it employed in part to finance guerrilla movements in Latin America and to provide its own foreign aid to Nicaragua and Grenada.

In the case of East European countries that needed the low-cost fuel to keep their own economies from collapsing, the subsidy heavily increased their dependence on the Soviet Union. Poland, for example, was threatened by the Soviet Union in 1981 with a cutoff in its allotment of 105 million barrels a year if it did not crack down on the Solidarity movement. Polish leaders, understanding that the nation would be bankrupt without this Soviet assistance, acceded to the demand.

Even Yugoslavia, which prides itself on its political independence, relied throughout the early 1980's on receiving from the Soviet Union just under 100 million barrels of oil a year (although, in its public accounting, it disguised some two-thirds of this oil as Middle East imports). The value of this annual subsidy, which was worth upward of $3 billion in 1981, had at least to be taken into consideration in any action that seriously went against the interests of the Soviet Union. In this context, it is not particularly surprising that Yugoslavia publicly supported the Soviet Union on almost all its foreign-policy initiatives in the 1980's.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus the higher oil prices rose, the more potentially costly it became not only for the bloc countries but even for neutral nations to oppose Soviet policy.

THE Soviet Union also gained from inflated oil prices a rich market for arms sales, its second largest export. Throughout the 70's and early 80's, Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil producers actually gave the Soviet Union 50 to 60 million barrels of oil a year to pay for shipments of armaments to Syria. In separate oil-for-arms barter deals, Iraq, Iran, and Libya provided another 50 million barrels a year. (North Korea and other Soviet allies received an additional 60 million barrels a year from Iran.) When the price of oil then escalated, partly because of the wars being waged with these weapons, the Soviet Union received a windfall from selling its Middle East oil on the world market.

This meant, in effect, that the Soviet Union was being subsidized by Saudi Arabia and other Middle East nations for stationing military advisers and prepositioning planes, tanks, and missiles in the Levant. Between 1979 and 1983, according to CIA estimates, the Soviet Union sold oil producers over $27 billion worth of arms (with $9.2 billion worth going to Syria, $7.2 billion worth to Iraq, $5.8 billion to Libya, and $2.7 billion to North and South Yemen). During these years, arms shipments paid for by oil producers accounted in value for over 12 percent of total Soviet exports.

Finally, the demand for oil helped the Soviet Union acquire Western technology on a scale not seen since the days of lend-lease. Contrary to prevailing myths in the media, the vast preponderance of technology transfers from West to East proceeded not from espionage or theft but from openly-arrived at deals with some of the largest corporations in the West.

During the 1970's, for example, the Bechtel Corporation installed in the Soviet Union the pipelines, compressors, and processing facilities that greatly enhanced its capabilities for exporting petrochemicals. Similarly, Caterpillar delivered to the Soviets highly-specialized pipelaying equipment (which could also be used for missile handling). The Soviet offer to deliver 70 billion cubic meters a year of Siberian natural gas to Western Europe (the equivalent of 2 million barrels of oil a day) induced English, French, Italian, and West German corporations, with the full backing of their governments, to sell the Soviet Union the turbines, control mechanisms, alloyed steel, drilling bits, and earthmoving equipment necessary to construct the transcontinental pipeline. The technology for entire industrial centers was transferred to the Soviet Union by European and American contractors during the 1970's. As the price of oil soared during the decade, the value of Soviet machinery imports from the West increased by 1000 percent, reaching $9 billion in 1983.

This inflow of capital goods and technology was indeed counted on by Gorbachev to modernize Soviet industry. And so long as the price of oil moved upward, this transfer of capital from the West to the East could reasonably be expected to continue. On this score, there is no economic symmetry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Whereas rising oil prices decrease the GNP of the United States, Japan, and Western Europe, since they are net importers, they increase the GNP of the Soviet Union, since it is a net exporter. (According to a 1983 Treasury Department analysis, every $7 increase in the price of a barrel of oil decreased the GNP of 26 industrial nations of the OECD by approximately 1 percent while increasing the GNP of the Soviet Union by roughly .5 percent.)

IN 1983, oil prices began falling, as European nations reduced the stockpiles they had built up at the start of the Iraq-Iran war. At about the same time, Soviet crude-oil production peaked at 12.5 million barrels a day and gradually began declining. Then the price abruptly collapsed, falling from $30 a barrel in mid-December 1985 to $15 a barrel in February of this year. Soviet oil production meanwhile had fallen to 11.5 million barrels a day.

To make matters worse, the Soviet pipeline was delivering less than half the expected 70 billion meters of natural gas a year to Western Europe; and the price, which was pegged by a complicated formula to the free-market price of crude oil, was scarcely half of what the Soviets had expected in 1981. This decline was made more disastrous for the Soviets because they were paid for their exported oil in dollars, which had declined by more than 33 percent against European currencies (and the Soviets had to trade these dollars in for Deutschmarks to pay for a large share of their machinery imports from Germany).*

Thus the halving of prices amounted to a new oil shock, which reversed the flow of wealth from East to West. It quickly eroded the advantages of being a petropower. With oil exports accounting for 80 percent of its foreign exchange, the Soviets had to reckon with the fact that for every decline of a dollar in the price of oil, they would lose a billion dollars a year in hard currencies. The $15 decline thus meant that the Soviet Union would earn $15 billion less in foreign exchange in 1986. Its terms of trade would, at these lower prices, quickly deteriorate. Since its commitments to buy machinery and wheat from the West could not be

* When, in March 1986, oil fell to $10 a barrel, the Soviets received unexpected—and possibly unintended—help from Vice President George Bush. After he suggested that the United States might encourage Saudi Arabia to cut back on its oil production, oil prices rallied back to the $15 level.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cut back so quickly, it had no choice but to increase drastically its debt to the West.

Falling prices also greatly reduced the dependence of the Soviet Union's allies—and neutral countries—on Soviet fixed-price exports. The price drop caused considerable problems as well for Communist-bloc nations that funded their foreign activities by reselling their Soviet oil allotment. Cuba, for example, finding the resale value of its Soviet oil sharply eroded, had to postpone payment on its foreign debt this April. Soviet relations with allies would become progressively more difficult if the world price were to drop below the Soviets' fixed price—as it did in the 1950's. The Soviet oil allotment would then become a tax rather than a subsidy for the allies.

Moreover, the Arab oil producers who buy most of the Soviet weapons are themselves vulnerable to falling prices. Even Saudi Arabia is running such a huge deficit this year that it has delayed announcing its 1986 budget. And if these producers can no longer afford to purchase weapons, the Soviet Union's ability to earn foreign exchange will be further reduced. Under those circumstances, the Soviet Union would have to reassess the value of maintaining unsubsidized military establishments in Libya and Syria.

Finally, in the Soviet Union itself, despite all the raised expectations of a reformed economy, lower oil prices would greatly constrict the import of Western capital and technology. As a May 15 Defense Department memorandum entitled "Effect of Declining Oil Prices on the USSR" noted: "The drop in oil prices has created a critical problem for the Soviets in their hard-currency account.... The USSR will confront intractable economic choices and its ability to purchase grain, technology, and computers will be severely affected. To pursue economic modernization the Soviets need to obtain turn-key plans, and after Chernobyl they may need large amounts of food and milk. Their loss of hard currency, therefore, poses a grave dilemma."

For the past decade, the success of the Soviet Union in maintaining—and expanding—its empire has rested largely on the wealth generated by its petroleum exports. It follows that keeping prices down is in the political (as well as the economic) interest of the West.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whose Palestine?

Erich Isaac and Rael Jean Isaac

IN THE spring of 1984, Harper & Row published, to almost universal critical acclaim, a 600-page book by the journalist Joan Peters called *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*. The book received almost two hundred reviews around the country, with many if not most reviewers echoing the sentiments of Martin Peretz, the editor of the *New Republic*, who wrote that this was a book that could "change the mind of our generation" regarding the Arab-Israel conflict.* Miss Peters received a National Jewish Book Award for 1984 and the book went through eight hardcover printings before going into paperback. It was also published in England, receiving wide attention although more mixed reviews.

A substantial part of Miss Peters's book is devoted to an analysis of the historical experience of Jews in Arab lands, and to an account of the betrayal by Britain of its responsibilities under the Mandate when during World War II it effectively barred Palestine to Jewish refugees and thereby entered into complicity in Hitler's "Final Solution." But it was not these sections that struck most reviewers as the book's major contribution. Rather, it was Miss Peters's demographic analysis, which occupies roughly a third of *From Time Immemorial*. Here, she separates out from the rest of Western Palestine the areas of Jewish settlement, and maintains that as early as 1893, there were in these "Jewish-settled areas" more Jews than either Muslims or Christians. Using projections from 1893 data and a variety of contemporary sources, including a series of British Mandatory reports, she proceeds to argue that contrary to Arab assertions and the by-now conventional wisdom, Jewish settlers in Palestine did not displace native Arabs but rather *attracted* large numbers of Arabs—both "in-migrants," i.e., Arabs from the hill country of Judea and Samaria, and immigrants from neighboring Arab countries. The latter, Peters contends, for the most part entered the country illegally, but this was by and large ignored by the same British authorities who were zealously circumscribing Jewish immigration into the Jewish National Home.

During and immediately after Israel's War of Independence (1948-49) an "exchange of populations" took place: Jews expelled from Arab countries made their way to Israel, while an almost equal number of Arabs left the areas of Jewish settlement in Palestine. (Except for the Negev, these areas formed the greater part of the territory that became Israel.) According to Miss Peters, the Arab exodus was in fact largely made up not of long-settled Palestinian Arabs but of recent arrivals, many of whom presumably simply returned to the areas from which they or their fathers had come, whether to the hill country of Western Palestine (now called the West Bank) or to their countries of origin. Since these Arabs had not developed a sense of national feeling for Palestine (Miss Peters continues), it would have been a fairly easy task to reintegrate them into neighboring Arab lands. The refusal of all but Jordan to permit such integration of the refugees—because of a determination to use them as pawns in the struggle against Israel—is what converted their plight into a catastrophe for them and their children.

Thus, in brief, the argument of *From Time Immemorial*. The book's success in undercutting Arab territorial and national claims, coupled with the attention it received, made inevitable a response from those who feel an affinity with the Palestinian Arab cause. That cause generates enthusiasm in a variety of non-Arab breasts: the anti-Zionist secular Left, the Christian Left (especially as lodged in the bureaucracies of the mainline churches), the anti-Semitic Right, those with oil and trade interests in the Arab world, State Department and British Foreign Office Arabists, and those connected with educational, health, or missionary efforts in the Arab world.

The assault began only a few months after the book's publication when one Norman Finkelstein (subsequently identified as a doctoral candidate at Princeton University) sent some highly critical comments to the publisher. Noam Chomsky, whose career as a political activist has brought

ERICH ISAAC and RAEL JEAN ISAAC are the co-authors of *The Coercive Utopians*. Mr. Isaac is a professor of geography at the City College of the City University of New York. Mrs. Isaac is the author of two books on Israeli politics.

*COMMENTARY's generally favorable review, by Daniel Pipes, appeared in July 1984.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him more public attention, if considerably less credit, than his career in linguistics, followed up with a phone call to Miss Peters's editor at Harper & Row, demanding to know what was being done in response to Finkelstein's critique.

Finkelstein's attack, published as an article ("Immemorial Hoax") in *In These Times*, is in the Left's best conspiratorial style. Finkelstein does not simply criticize Miss Peters for mistakes of interpretation or of fact. Rather, he decries the book as a deliberate hoax, "among the most spectacular frauds ever published on the Arab-Israeli conflict." A measure of the scholarly objectivity of this "graduate student" is his attribution of "fraud" not merely to Joan Peters but to much of the writing on Jewish rights in Palestine, "a field littered with crass propaganda, forgeries, and fakes. . . ."

Even the terms "fraud" and "vulgar hoax" do not satisfy Finkelstein. In a letter to the London *Jewish Chronicle* he has denounced the book as the "most successful disinformation effort ever mounted by Israel's self-styled 'friends' abroad." "Disinformation," of course, derives from *"dezinformatsiya,"* the craft practiced by a department of the KGB which specializes in faking documents and spreading "cooked" materials to a targeted population. For Finkelstein, Zionism by definition seems to be a malevolent plot to extinguish Palestinian nationalism and steal its homeland.

There was a predictable lineup following Finkelstein's article, with reviews of *From Time Immemorial* in the *Nation* (by Edward Said, a member of the Palestine National Council, as well as by Alexander Cockburn, whose credentials as an anti-Israel spokesman are scarcely less impressive than Said's), the leftist *Village Voice*, and the *Link* (published by a pro-Arab group called Americans for Middle East Understanding), all of them citing Finkelstein while adding little to him.

In England, a second major attack on the book was launched by Sir Ian and David Gilmour in the *London Review of Books*, a journal well known for publishing the views of the anti-Zionist lobby. Sir Ian is a Tory who served as Lord Privy Seal and Foreign Office spokesman in the House of Commons. More to the point here, he was first chairman of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU), while his son David has served as both its information officer and assistant director. While the tone of their review is gentlemanly, at least in contrast to Finkelstein's invective, most of the specific points raised in their piece are unmistakably his.

THUS far, whether coming from the ideological Left or Right, the hostile reviews were guided by a clear anti-Zionist animus rather than by a concern for scholarly standards. In a letter to the *London Review of Books*, one reader noted acerbically and quite correctly that CAABU's own material was "at best tendentious and at times downright offensive," and that "the Gilmour family's concern for historical accuracy could be profitably invested in the material produced under their own auspices." Little credibility resides in reviewers who would not be convinced even by the most meticulous scholarship, since their basic presumption is that Israel should not exist.

But then in November 1985 a story appeared in the New York *Times* (by Colin Campbell) describing the book as a subject of "dispute" and quoting not only its anti-Zionist critics but Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg ("I think that she's cooked the statistics") and the Israeli historian Yehoshua Porath ("I think it's a sheer forgery"). The *Times*'s Anthony Lewis followed with a column in January 1986 entitled "There Were No Indians." In this attack on Miss Peters's thesis, Lewis seems to have relied entirely upon the book's critics rather than upon any independent reading of his own, since he misquotes her statistics. Even his analogy between the Palestinian Arabs and the American Indians is problematic, since one could equally well cast the Jews, with their long history of dispossession from Palestine, as the "Indians" in this scenario.

More or less simultaneously with Lewis's column there appeared a long review of the Peters book by Yehoshua Porath in the *New York Review of Books*. This piece had been eagerly awaited by the Left (Edward Said referred hopefully to its appearance in his own article in the *Nation* several months earlier). In it, Finkelstein is dispensed with summarily ("I do not propose here to go over the ground . . . already covered"), and instead Porath goes after the "discredited" Zionist "myths" which, he argues, underlie Miss Peters's work. With Porath, and with Jesse Zel Lurie, the former editor of *Hadassah* magazine who came forward to attack the book in *Jewish World*, a Long Island Jewish newspaper, the focus shifts to intra-Zionist ideological conflicts. This is explicit in the conclusion of Porath's review, where he declares that "[E]veryone familiar with the writing of the extreme nationalists of Zeev Jabotinsky's party (the forerunner of the Herut party) would immediately recognize the tired and discredited arguments in Miss Peters's book." Similarly, Lurie calls the book variously a "Herut polemic" and a "Revisionist polemic." Both, in other words, see Miss Peters as enhancing the claims of political strands within Zionism with which they disagree. But since her themes would resonate equally well with the Labor mainstream (and have in fact been important staples of its ideology), these comments are hard to understand except as attempts to discredit the book by association.

Interestingly, both the Zionist and the anti-Zionist critics have triumphantly pointed to an alleged disdain for the book in Israel. Porath told

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the *Times* that "in Israel, at least, the book was almost universally dismissed as sheer rubbish except maybe as a propaganda weapon," and Lurie declares that "no Israeli publisher will touch this book" for "Israeli book readers are too sophisticated for this kind of rubbish." Even Edward Said, who normally does not look to the Israeli public for vindication of his judgment, notes with satisfaction that reviews of the book in Israel were "perfunctory and dismissive" and that the reviewer for the daily *Davar* had treated it with "unmistakable contempt." Actually, although *Davar* did indeed publish what could fairly be called a dismissive review, most notices in Israel were favorable, and the book is being published by the Kibbutz Hameuchad—a *Labor* publishing house—which has assigned it to one of Israel's top translators.

QUITE apart from who the critics of *From Time Immemorial* have been, however, there is the matter of what they have said. Here the problem becomes more complex.

There is no doubt that much of the criticism is not merely ill-intentioned, or downright vicious, but silly. Thus, the *Link* argues at length against the "myth" that mid-19th-century Palestine was a "neglected land," citing travelers who testified to the country's scenic beauty and in particular Lawrence Oliphant, who reported in 1887 that he saw in the Valley of Esdraelon "a huge green lake of waving wheat." But even today there are few sights more beautiful than the barren hills of Ephraim north of Jerusalem, and testimony about Palestine's natural beauty says nothing as to its state of development. Oliphant, one of the early British Christian proponents of Zionism, was worried that the massive testimony of travelers concerning the desolate character of the country would discourage Jews from coming, and thus emphasized everything he could find that was positive. But even he spoke of rich soil "waiting for development." Overwhelmingly, the relevant documents show that Palestine at the turn of the century was, to use the title of a recent compendium of eyewitness reports from that period, a *Land of Dust*.

The Gilmours expand upon the PLO chestnut that the Arabs of Palestine are the true "immemorial" inhabitants of the land. They write: "Their ancestors are the Canaanites and Philistines who, unlike the Jews, were never deported. They remained in Palestine . . . and their descendants formed, and still form, the core of the indigenous population." But not only are the Palestinian Arabs not descendants of Canaanites, it is highly doubtful that more than a very few are even descended from those who settled the country as part of the Arab invasion of the 7th century. For over a thousand years following the Arab conquest, Palestine underwent a series of devastating invasions, followed by massacres of the existing population: Seljuk Turks and Fatimid reconquerors were followed by Crusaders who were followed by waves of Mongol tribes who were followed in turn by Tartars, Mamelukes, Turks, and incessant Bedouin raiders.

In the course of the 18th and 19th centuries Palestine was essentially repopulated by foreigners, some coming from great distances. Egyptians arrived in a number of waves, with an especially large one from 1832 to 1840. Sudanese pioneered successfully in the swampy marshlands. Entire tribes of Bedouin from as far away as Libya settled on the coastal plain. Abandoned villages in the Galilee were resettled by Lebanese Christians. Coastal towns attracted Armenians, Syrians, Turks. The French expansion in North Africa resulted in waves of refugees coming to Palestine; many of the followers of the Algerian resistance leader Abd el Kader went to the Galilee, where they founded a number of villages (Samakh, Deishum). Russian expansion into the Caucasus led to the emigration of many of its Muslim peoples (Circassians and Georgians) who were welcomed by the Ottoman empire; many of these made their way to Palestine, where they founded their own villages. Similarly, the Austrian advance into the Balkans led to the emigration of Bosnian Muslims to Palestine. Turkomans from Russian Central Asia and Kurds complete this roster of "Canaanites." Ironically, the only surviving "Canaanite" culture is that of the Jews, who everywhere still pray, and in Israel also speak, in a Canaanite language.

Much of Finkelstein's malevolent attack is similarly wrong. He incorrectly adds 40,000 Arabs to Miss Peters's projections of the number of Arabs who could have been expected, on the basis of natural increase, to live in the Galilee and Negev (what she calls "Area IV") in 1947, and then accuses her of not accounting for them properly. He charges her with "falsifying" the Anglo-American *Survey of Palestine* of 1945-46 by claiming that it discloses tens of thousands of Arab illegal immigrants who had been brought into Palestine during the war when in fact (according to Finkelstein) it states only that 3,800 laborers had been brought in. Yet the *Survey* does list many thousands of laborers who were brought in under official arrangements or came on their own. Egyptian labor, for example, was imported by civilian contractors to the military, without the agreement of the civil administration. The *Survey* is admittedly confusing, at one point saying that no estimates are available of the number who entered in this way and shortly afterward giving an estimate of just under 10,000 in this category. Even those brought in "officially" numbered far more than 3,800; the *Survey* mentions an additional 4,000 illegal immigrants employed directly by the War Department, and 380 by the Air Force. To conclude from the *Survey*, as Miss Peters does, that "tens of thousands" of illegal Arab immi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grants entered Palestine during the war thus appears reasonable.

ALTHOUGH as an Israeli scholar Porath is the most credible of the critics, his *New York Review* essay is only superficially more balanced than that of the other anti-Peters writers. Porath contrasts what he calls Arab and Zionist "myths," each of which contains "some grain of historical truth" which is then "twisted into a false and grotesque shape." His chief accusation against Joan Peters is that she treats the Jewish-Zionist myths as if they were "true and relevant."

According to Porath the major Arab myths are: (1) The Jews are not a nation and Arabs occupied the land as far back as pre-biblical times; (2) historically, Jews in Arab countries were treated fairly and equally, were not in sympathy with Zionism, and emigrated to Israel after 1948 only as a result of the machinations of Israel's government working with corrupt Arab rulers who were "stooges of imperialism"; and (3) in the 1948 war Jews systematically expelled the Arab population, if they did not in fact start the war expressly for that purpose.

Against these Arab myths Porath poses such Zionist myths as: (1) The ancient Israelite and Judean kingdoms were equivalent to modern nation-states, and the Maccabean revolt was the equivalent of a modern struggle for national liberation; (2) Jews in exile retained a separate national identity and preserved the memory of their ancestral land to which they hoped to return and which, against all odds, some never left; (3) Palestine during the Ottoman and early British period was a barren land, "hardly inhabited," with modern Jewish settlement bringing about economic development and attracting Arabs from neighboring lands; and (4) the 1948 war was fought because the Arabs rejected the partition plan, and although there was a subsequent de-facto exchange of populations, Jewish refugees were cared for and rehabilitated while the Arab states refused to resettle Arab refugees and prevented their absorption.

For all his apparent scholarly dispassion in this balancing of opposing myths, there is something very wrong with the exercise. Most of the Arab myths Porath cites belong to the category of historical fabrications. His Zionist myths, by contrast, are for the most part reasonable summaries of what happened. Even the comparison between the ancient kingdoms and modern Israel is not as absurd as Porath seems to think. Those ancient states existed; they were not manufactured to give legitimation to a newly invented nationalism. Moreover, they were a vivid part of the religious and national life of Jews throughout the millennia.

On some points, indeed, Porath actually seems to accept the most egregious Arab myths as true. Thus, in arguing against the Zionist claim that mid-19th-century Palestine was a barren and depopulated land, Porath declares that those living in Palestine at the beginning of modern Jewish settlement were either descendants of the pre-Islamic population or Bedouins. But as we noted earlier, there is overwhelming evidence of massive settlement in Palestine by foreigners in the 18th and 19th centuries. Perhaps Porath would depart from the Arab myth by maintaining that the pre-Islamic population was not Arab. But this is a distinction without a difference, for the myth in its Palestinian version claims a separate identity for the population reaching back to ancient Canaan, with subsequent ethnic accretions which were Arabized and became Muslim in the course of time.

Porath faults Miss Peters for overlooking variations in the treatment of Jews in Islamic countries over the centuries, and the fact that Jews occupied high positions in some parts of the Ottoman empire. One cannot, however, deduce too much concerning the status of a minority as a whole from the position of a few in elite positions. Certainly, conditions varied, just as they did in Christendom, but the *dhimmi*—"protected," i.e., second-class—status, particularly as it applied to Jews, was a degraded and degrading one.

As for the exchange of populations, that is no myth; it happened. Porath concedes only a "superficial similarity" between the two kinds of refugees, Arab and Jewish. For the Arabs, Porath asserts, the experience was "an unwanted national calamity that was accompanied by unending personal tragedies," while from the Zionist point of view the Jewish refugees represented "the ingathering of the exiles." To this one may answer that for many Near Eastern and North African Jews, the migration involved personal tragedy and mob violence. (As early as November 1945 bloody pogroms broke out in Tripoli, Libya, and since the British army did not intervene, spread through the countryside.) The perceptions of individuals caught up in such events may differ, both among Jews and among Arabs. The decisive difference between the two *groups* lies precisely where Miss Peters (and the Zionist "myth") locates it: in their reception and treatment in the country of refuge.

To Porath, the Zionist myths are deeply flawed; no matter how alive and powerful the past was in the emotional and intellectual life of Jews, the modern state of Israel has its ideological roots elsewhere. In his analysis, the state of Israel emerges not as an integral product of a specifically Jewish historical experience but rather in discontinuity with it. To Porath, Zionism is mainly a European-style nationalist ideology that appeared among secularized Jews in response to the failure of assimilation in Europe. The Jewish sense of a shared fate and a common destiny, which binds together the communities of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dispersion and today focuses on Israel as its primary concern, may perhaps reflect an emotional need, but is based on a historical illusion. Whatever else one may say about this line of reasoning, it lends intellectual respectability to the Arabs' contention that they can be anti-Zionist without being anti-Jewish.

Porath's concern for debunking Zionist "myths" is the more noteworthy since he is himself best known for his sympathetic studies of the rise of Palestinian nationalism, which, despite its recent origin, he does not dismiss as a myth. Yet it is precisely as myth that this nationalism is best viewed. In general Arab nationalism was overwhelmingly the product of non-Arab Christian intellectuals to whom the vision of secular nationhood provided a potential escape from the degraded status of being non-Muslims in the Islamic world, as well as from the oppressive hold of their own religio-communal elites. A number of Greek Orthodox were especially active in establishing the movement: George Antonius, Rafiq Rizq Sallum, Issa al Issa, Ya'aqub Faraj, Khalil Sakakini, George Hanna, Khalil Iskandar Qubrusi. By creating an Arab "nation" these ideologues hoped in effect to become Arabs. But for most, the effort failed. As Bat Ye'or points out in *The Dhimmi*: "Arab values, linked to Islam, justified the very discriminatory laws of the *dhimma* from which they were attempting to free themselves by means of Arabism." Only Palestinian nationalism, the most recently-minted version, offers a myth—that of a "secular-democratic state"—which provides room for radicalized Christians and a quasi-secularized Muslim intelligentsia.

ON THE other hand, despite all the faults of Miss Peters's critics, her book does indeed deserve some of the criticism it has received. Her handling of materials, particularly in the central section dealing with demographic issues, is flawed. Even some of Finkelstein's specific criticisms, setting aside his accusations of deliberate deception, are well taken. One of these criticisms was amplified by the Gilmours, and since it involves arguably the worst error Miss Peters makes, and also illustrates general defects in her handling of material, it is worth examining in some detail.

Sir John Hope Simpson, a civil servant with extensive experience in India, had been called upon by the British to assess the absorptive capacity of Palestine, particularly in relation to agricultural settlement, in the wake of the 1929 Arab riots. In his report of 1930 there occurs a paragraph of which Miss Peters makes extensive use. It reads as follows:

> The case of the "pseudo-traveler" who comes in with permission for a limited time and continues in Palestine after the term of his mission has expired is more difficult. Each case requires consideration on its merits. Where the case is flagrant, recourse should certainly be had to expulsion. In cases of no special flagrancy, and where there is no objection to the individual, it is probably sufficient to maintain the present practice, under which he is counted against the Labour Schedule, though this method does a certain injustice to the Jewish immigrant outside the country whose place is taken by the traveler concerned.

Miss Peters interprets this to mean that the *Arab* pseudo-traveler was replacing the *Jewish* immigrant. In her interpretation:

> The pivotal Hope Simpson Report literally admitted not only that it was "the present practice" of British officials to blink at all but the most "flagrant" of the thousands of Arabs immigrating into Western Palestine, but also acknowledged that the illegal Arab immigration was an "injustice" that was *displacing* the prospective *Jewish* immigrants. [Emphasis in original]

The trouble with this, as Finkelstein and then the Gilmours rightly point out, is that Hope Simpson was really referring to one group of Jews (those who entered on temporary visas) displacing another group of Jews (those waiting for immigration certificates under the labor schedule which the Mandatory administration annually negotiated with the Jewish Agency). Hope Simpson, in other words, was addressing the question of what to do with those who "jumped the queue," and his solution was to continue the "present practice" of allowing them to do so despite the fact that this involved a "certain injustice" to those waiting in line.*

Unfortunately, by constantly coming back to the passage she has misinterpreted in the Hope Simpson Report, Miss Peters converts what should have been a confined mistake, easily correctible in a later edition of the book, into a lethal systemic error. (Finkelstein found 19 references on 12 different pages; actually there are more.) The reiterated use of the Hope Simpson passage is

* The chapter of the report in which this passage appears is devoted to a discussion of the procedures used by the British Palestine government in issuing immigration certificates to Jews. But illegal Arab immigration was also an awkward problem for Hope Simpson, and immediately before his discussion of (Jewish) pseudo-travelers, he inserts a paragraph on the failure of land border posts to control illegal crossings: "The immigrant who wishes to evade the control naturally leaves the road before reaching the frontier and takes to the footpaths over the Hills." Actually, given the context, a reader might easily think he is speaking of Jews here as well; the only way one can be sure is that twelve pages on, in a passage explicitly concerning Arabs, Hope Simpson mentions their illicit immigration through Syria and across the northern frontiers and says, "This question has already been discussed."

What presumably misled Miss Peters, then, was this paragraph on infiltration across the land border. She correctly inferred that Hope Simpson was speaking of Arabs here, but then incorrectly concluded that the following section on pseudo-travelers referred to Arabs as well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the worst example in this book of a tendency on Miss Peters's part to substitute, for the piling-on of evidence, the escalation of rhetoric based on the same piece of evidence.

But the problem goes deeper, to Miss Peters's ability to evaluate evidence. She writes: "The [Hope Simpson] Report protected the so-called 'existing' indigenous Arab population, the same community that the report itself had proved was largely composed either of immigrants or Arab in-migrants. . . ." Actually, even if Hope Simpson had indeed been referring to Arab pseudo-travelers, Miss Peters would have no justification for claiming that the report "proved" the Arab population was composed "largely" of immigrants or in-migrants. It does no such thing.

Ironically, if Miss Peters had read the report more carefully, and had avoided grandiose claims of "proof," she could legitimately have used it in support of her thesis. She could have pointed to Hope Simpson's acknowledgment (this time clearly referring to Arabs) that "illicit immigration through Syria and across the northern frontier of Palestine is material" as well as his reference to "unemployment lists being swollen by immigrants from Trans-Jordania" and his obfuscation of the issue by discussing it in a context where Jewish immigration, both legal and illegal, was being analyzed.

Let us look at another case (duly picked up by Finkelstein) in which Miss Peters is guilty of carelessness. She writes (this time, fortunately, only twice) that "although carefully categorized records were kept for age groups, occupations, amount of capital, etc. of those *Jews* who immigrated, there was no specific accounting of the non-Jews in the official reports. None except for one phenomenon . . . the number of non-Jews recorded as having been 'deported for immigration offenses' was more than twice as great as the number of Jews." In fact, the British reports to the Mandate Commission, to which Miss Peters is referring, specify for (legal) Arab immigrants, as well as for Jews, the country of origin, sex, age, conjugal condition, and financial status.

By making an error of fact here, Miss Peters undercuts what is basically an excellent point: namely, that the deportation figures were consistently higher for non-Jews than for Jews; in 1935 (as Miss Peters notes) they reached almost as high as ten to one. We know from experience in our own country that the number of illegal immigrants caught by the authorities is in rough proportion to the number entering; that is, the largest number of illegals coming into the United States are Mexicans and more Mexicans are caught than Salvadorans or Nicaraguans, who also enter in substantial numbers. U.S. immigration authorities estimate that currently for each person caught, another slips through. Moreover, many of those deported to Mexico simply turn around and almost immediately cross the border once again. While corresponding proportions cannot simply be extrapolated to Mandatory Palestine, the cases are similar in that porous borders combine with economically better conditions to attract immigrants from neighboring countries.

But perhaps the most serious problem with Miss Peters's book is not any of the errors picked up by Finkelstein but her apparent inability to use judiciously the material at her disposal. At times she goes so far as to ignore evidence that does not bear out a specific point she wants to make even when that evidence actually strengthens her general case.

Consider the example of immigrants to Palestine from the Hauran in Syria in 1934. Miss Peters quotes an interview given by the governor of the Hauran, Tewfik Bey El-Hurani, published in *La Syrie* on August 12, 1934, in which he stated that "*in the last few months*, from 30,000 to 36,000 Hauranese [Syrians] had *entered Palestine and settled there*" (emphasis added by Miss Peters). This passage receives the full treatment, with frequent repetitions and escalating rhetoric in which the interview is described as one "verified by an official international document" and then as "hard evidence." But even on its face it is very soft evidence indeed, for although Miss Peters makes much of El-Hurani's statement that the Hauranis had "settled" in Palestine (i.e., had not simply gone in search of temporary work because of bad agricultural conditions that year), there was no way El-Hurani could know three months after the exodus whether it was permanent or not.

Actually, Miss Peters has much better evidence on this point which she ignores. In the testimony given before the Palestine Royal Commission by the Jewish Agency's Eliahu Epstein and Moshe Shertok, and on the very pages from which she elsewhere quotes effectively and extensively, there is a lengthy discussion of the immigrants who came from the Hauran in 1934. Epstein complained to the Commission about this Haurani influx; his estimate was that 20,000-25,000 had entered, of whom 6,000 to 8,000 had settled in Palestine. Epstein had done genuine research on the issue, visiting 30 villages in the Hauran to determine how many migrants had been seasonal and how many had left permanently. (He published some of his findings in the *Journal of the Royal Asian Society* in 1935.) One can only speculate that Miss Peters felt El-Hurani's numbers—30,000 to 36,000—made her case more dramatically than Epstein's better-documented account of 6,000 to 8,000. But a serious scholar obviously does not operate in this way.

Sharp—sometimes unfair—criticism has been directed at Miss Peters's population data and statistics. One ground of the attack has been that she uses different sources in determining the Jewish and the non-Jewish (Muslim and Christian) population for 1893. Thus, for the Arab

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Christian population she resorts to the Ottoman census of 1893. But she dismisses its figure of under 10,000 Jews, turning instead to the figure of 59,431 calculated in 1895 by the French geographer Vital Cuinet. This, however, is reasonable, because the Turkish figures covered Ottoman subjects and most Jews did not belong in that category. It is possible that Cuinet's figures are a little too high—the demographer Roberto Bacchi has estimated that there were 42,900 Jews five years earlier, in 1890—but they are clearly far more realistic than those of the Ottoman census. (It is a mark of Porath's polemical animus that he attempts to turn Miss Peters's use of different sources for the numbers of Jews and Arabs against her. In a subsequent exchange of letters in the *New York Review*, Porath asserts he never claimed the 1893 Ottoman census figure for Jews was correct. But he certainly left that impression by treating Miss Peters's use of disparate sources as suspect, and by failing to comment on the obvious inadequacy of Ottoman census figures with regard to Jews.)

On the other hand, there are problems with Miss Peters's figure of 92,300 non-Jews in what she defines as the "Jewish-settled area" in 1895. These 1895 figures are the base from which she makes her projections to 1947, bolstering her case that the Jewish-settled areas experienced an enormous growth of population impossible to account for by natural increase. In the correspondence on his article Porath points out that Miss Peters could not have drawn directly upon Ottoman census data because only the data for "kazas"—Ottoman subdistricts which do not correspond to her "Jewish-settled areas"—have been published. Porath concludes that Miss Peters's "figures were, at best, based on guesswork and an extremely tendentious guesswork at that."

On being asked (by Erich Isaac) how she had arrived at the figure of 92,300 Arabs in the Jewish-settled areas, Miss Peters described a method which historical geographers would find broadly acceptable. What she did was to superimpose the UN partition plan on the map of the 1893 kazas, as well as on the district map of the British Mandate government and on the ceasefire lines of 1949. This enabled her to identify the main areas of Jewish settlement; the purely Arab areas; and "intermediate" areas that may have had no Jewish settlement but became part of Israel, or had some Jewish settlement but came under Jordanian control. Some of the 1893 kazas presented no problem—they fell entirely out of or entirely within the area that became Israel. For kazas that fell only partly within her "Jewish-settled areas," she first identified the towns that became part of Israel, adding their Arab population to her figure for Arabs in the Jewish-settled area. (For these town populations she had to rely on a variety of contemporary reports.) Second, the rural population was presumed by her to be uniformly distributed throughout the kaza and the population was then proportionately divided between Jewish and Arab areas on the basis of the relative sizes of the territories assigned to each.

Historical geographers would have problems with Miss Peters's assumption of a uniformly distributed rural population. A geographer trying to reconstruct historical population patterns and densities would first do field studies on the age of villages, the duration of occupancy, abandonment and reoccupation of settlement sites, forms of settlements and their functions, geographic names, other ethnic indicators, types of farming, etc. These would flesh out data from travelers' descriptions, raw census figures, military and tax lists, consular correspondence, and the like. Such field work would also make it easier to delimit the various population regions, helping in this case to overcome the differences between Ottoman and British districts and thus increase the confidence in population projections from Ottoman times to the period of the British Mandate.

Of course Miss Peters could not be expected to engage in elaborate geographic fieldwork. But this means that her figures should have been presented tentatively, as a suggestive and valuable way of looking at population changes in these areas over time. The problem is not with what she has done, but with her failure to explain her method, and with the impression she leaves that her figures derive directly from the census and are thus "scientific." (We set aside the question of how reliable the Ottoman figures are, in itself the subject of considerable dispute.) Moreover, the reader is not informed that neither the Ottoman census nor Cuinet provides figures broken down for the Jewish-settled areas. Miss Peters writes: "The total of 92,300 'non-Jews' as recorded by the Turkish census corroborates Vital Cuinet's estimate in 1895 of roughly 93,600 'non-Jews'—37,853 Christians and 55,823 Muslims—compared to 59,431 Jews, in the Jewish-settled areas." Those numbers actually represent Miss Peters's estimate for both the Turkish census and Cuinet, neither of whom "records" them.*

IRONICALLY, there was no need for Miss Peters to overstate the precision or importance of her projections because there is overwhelming evidence, some of which (for example, in the studies of Fred Gottheil) she uses

* There are problems as well with Miss Peters's map. The Western Galilee is incorrectly shown as an area devoid of Jewish settlement (thus disposing of Hanita, Nahariya, Shavei Zion, etc.). Moreover, according to the map, Miss Peters's "Area III," which she defines as an "Intermediate area, some Jewish settlement (excluded from Israel, 1949-67)," has no reason for being; since the area is entirely Arab, it should have been part of her "Area V: Main area of Arab settlement, no Jewish settlement (excluded from Israel, 1949-67)."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in her book, of extensive in-migration from the predominantly Arab to the Jewish-settled areas. Scholars, Porath included, do not dispute this (Porath disagrees on the *reason* for the migration). Such dispute as there is concerns the amount of illicit Arab immigration. The projections do not address this question, but rather confirm the disproportionate growth of areas of Jewish settlement compared with mainly or purely Arab areas *within* Western Palestine.

Arieh Avneri, in *The Claim of Dispossession*, published after Miss Peters's book, provides additional data in support of her thesis, with regard both to Arab in-migration and to Arab immigration. (It is noteworthy that Porath, who so vigorously disputes Miss Peters, is one of those thanked by Avneri for "valuable comments" on a manuscript that reaches the same conclusion as hers.) Avneri finds that between 1922 and 1947, in 35 regions of Western Palestine that became Israel, the Arab population increased by 134 percent. By contrast, in 13 regions where there was no Jewish settlement, the Arab population increased by only 98 percent. Avneri points out that even the 98-percent increase is deceptive, for it includes Arab Jerusalem whose population grew over a twenty-five-year period at a rate second only to that of Haifa (150 percent as compared with Haifa's 290 percent). Cities remote from Jewish development grew much more slowly: Nablus, 56 percent; Jenin, 78 percent; Hebron, 64 percent. (Gaza was an exception to these very low rates.)

The rural Arab population also grew in response to Jewish development. The growth was highest in the hinterland of Jaffa, which was the rural area of greatest Jewish concentration, but in the Haifa and Acre district Arab rural population also increased in response to the growing urban demand for vegetables and fruit. In contrast, the rural population in the districts of Jenin, Nablus, Hebron, and Gaza, all remote from Jewish settlements, grew at rates below the national average.

The geographer Avraham Brawer, in his book *Eretz Yisrael,* published in 1949, compares the population of Western Palestine with that of neighboring countries. He finds that even the purely Arab areas had a population density (96 per square kilometer) equal to that of Lebanon with its more favorable climatic conditions and large, culturally more advanced Christian population component, and double that of the settled areas of Syria and Cyprus, both of which enjoyed better climatic and soil conditions. In the areas of Jewish settlement, the population density was much higher: 136 per square kilometer. Brawer attributes the high population density in all of Western Palestine to the infusion of Jewish capital and the dramatic improvements in public health, which had no equal at the time in any Mediterranean country except France.

As we have noted, Porath does not dispute the fact of Arab migration within Western Palestine to areas of Jewish settlement on the coast. As against Miss Peters, however, he attributes this not to the presence of the Jews but to improvements made by the Mandatory government. It is true that Arabs found work in the government's public-works projects, including the railroad and ports. In fact, as Miss Peters points out, the utilization of Arab labor by the British was a standing grievance of the Jewish Agency. Jobs were being created by an administration pledged to facilitate the development of a Jewish National Home (with tax money, moreover, coming chiefly from the Jewish population), and those jobs were being filled, often not even by Palestinian Arabs but by Arabs coming from abroad. Thus, in December 1936, out of 750 men employed in porterage at Haifa port, 200 were Egyptians and 500 others were described as "Hauranis," with only 50 being Palestinian Arabs.

Nevertheless, while it is possible that Britain might have developed the port of Haifa as a naval base and oil port even had there been no Jews in Palestine, the fact remains that Haifa's growth was closely connected to the development of Jewish Palestine. It was in Haifa that in 1905 Baron Rothschild set up the "Great Mills"—the first industrial enterprise in Palestine—and during the Mandate period Haifa became the home of the only cement plant in the country (Nesher), the largest factory of edible oil and soap (Shemen), the only industrial-scale glass factory (Phoenicia) and iron foundry (Vulcan). In Eastern Palestine (Transjordan), in the absence of Jewish investment, the British presence did not generate any comparable economic growth; it was Western Palestine that continued to be a magnet to the Arabs of Transjordan.

When it comes to the growth of the Arab population of Palestine, Porath, accepting the Mandatory government's claim that illegal immigration was a trivial factor, finds the entire explanation in a "demographic revolution." According to Porath, that "revolution" began at the end of the Ottoman rule as epidemics receded, and continued under the Mandate with further improvements in public health.

Porath, however, exaggerates the positive impact of Ottoman rule upon population growth. Natural increase in Palestine in the last three generations of Ottoman rule was negligible. Until 1842 there was not a single physician with formal medical training in the country. Well into the first decade of the 20th century, Bedouin raids, widespread illness and epidemics, and intercommunal fighting kept the population down. In the cholera epidemic of 1865, for example, one-third of the population of Jerusalem died. Infant mortality, needless to say, was high. The military draft took large numbers of men in their prime reproductive years for the various wars in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which the empire was engaged. A British consular report mentions 12,000 men having been drafted in the Jerusalem district, of whom only four came back. Emigration—a subject, incidentally, which Miss Peters completely ignores—was substantial, particularly of Christian Arabs, a better educated and more affluent group. Avneri notes the availability of reliable data from Bethlehem, for the ten-year period 1910-20, showing that a third of the population emigrated. The large Arab population in many Latin American countries—not to mention Detroit—testifies to this movement. (Shafik Handal, general secretary of El Salvador's Communist party, comes from a Palestinian Arab family.)

Although there is no doubt that health measures improved markedly under the British, and that natural increase was high, it is hard to see how the evidence for substantial Arab immigration can be dismissed. Even the British reports, including that of Hope Simpson, speak of "material" illicit Arab immigration that border posts were failing to halt. According to a study by the Israeli geographer Moshe Brawer of hundreds of Muslim villages in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee in areas remote from development to which relatively few immigrants came (and from which few left), the natural growth of the population between 1922 and 1931 was no more than 21 to 22 percent—not the almost 29 percent claimed by the Mandate figures, In other words, more than a quarter of the growth in that period was by immigration from neighboring countries. A similar study of such villages from 1922 to 1945 would show, according to Brawer, that about 20 percent of the growth of the Muslim population was by immigration, not 4 percent as the Mandate data claim. As for Christian Arabs—and here the Mandate itself acknowledged a growth by immigration of 28 percent—actual immigration was considerably higher.

Avneri comes to similar conclusions, finding that during the Mandate the country absorbed 100,000 legal and illegal Arab immigrants and their offspring—a figure that is not very different from Miss Peters's estimates.

DESPITE its lapses, then, Joan Peters's book offers a generally sound thesis. It should be noted, however, that both Miss Peters and her critics may have placed altogether too much emphasis on the demographic issues. Important though they be, these issues do not go to the heart of the conflict. The Jews, after all, had a historic claim to all of Palestine, not merely to the Jewish-settled area; they have also, repeatedly, demonstrated their willingness to accept considerably less than the whole. The Arabs, meanwhile, both in the past and today, have vigorously contested the right of the Jews to *any* portion of Palestine. It is in the service of this intractable Arab position that the myth has been successfully propagated of the Palestinian Arabs as a nation living on its soil "from time immemorial." The undeniable contribution of Joan Peters's book is to help unmask that myth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Pym and Mr. Larkin

Joseph Epstein

Has Anglophilia, like virginity past the age of twenty, become a dead letter? Impossible to answer such a question with anything approaching precision, but my suspicion is that, if Anglophilia is not yet dead, it is well on its way to dying. In America the love of England and of things English was perhaps based in part on snobbery, in part on a sense of cultural inferiority, but by far in greatest part, or so it seems to an Anglophile like myself, on England's immensely impressive cultural tradition. It takes centuries to build powerful traditions, but only decades for these same traditions to shrivel and disappear. There will always be an England; yet, slightly seedy and exhausted land that it now seems, there is a good deal less likelihood of there always being Anglophiles to admire it.

Forty or so years ago, nearly everything English, from the Anglophile's point of view, stood for quality. From shoes to book reviews, if it was English it was well made. There were exceptions. The English tradition in the visual arts was never strong, and English food was infamously poor. But English statesmen surpassed all others, with Winston Churchill easily the greatest political figure to emerge from a democratic nation in this century. At the highest reaches English public schools put a durable blacking on their students through training in classical languages, and this blacking was often polished to a high sheen at Oxford and Cambridge, with the result that England produced a regular supply of young men and women—mostly men, to be sure—who could think clearly and write fluently.

No doubt it was owing to the English educational system that English literary culture was without peer. Nineteenth-century Russian literature may have produced a greater run of star figures, from Pushkin through Chekhov, but the current of English literature ran deeper, producing wave after wave of important novelists and poets, critics and belletrists, editors and journalists. So rich was English literary culture that two of America's subtlest and most penetrating writers, Henry James and T.S. Eliot, not only felt more at home but took up permanent residence there—relocations signaling a profound tribute to a profound literary tradition.

All this seems gone now—ended not with a bang but with the Beatles. Did England's withdrawal from its vast empire foreshadow the waning of its cultural influence, lending credence to the view that cultural power ineluctably follows political power? Was England brought down from within by socialism, whose standard operating procedure is evidently to establish equality not by raising the lowest up but by bringing the best down? Was it owing to some combination of these and other factors too numerous to tot up here? Or is some higher, indecipherable force at work, acting upon countries the way the heavens act upon stars, running them through the cycle from white dwarf through red giant, at which stage they dissipate and disappear? Whatever the case, it is well to remember that when England's star shone, it lit up the firmament.

It seems unlikely that Henry James or T.S. Eliot, were either man alive today, would depart the United States for England. Not that either would have found contemporary America so very congenial, but England, my guess is, would no longer seem a serious alternative. English food has improved and English acting remains supreme. Anglophilia lives and even pays off at PBS, where such English television productions as Masterpiece Theater continue to draw large and appreciative audiences. It lives in some quarters of American academic life, where the old snobbery dies hard and an English accent, even a rather poor one, can still weigh heavily in a man's favor. It lingers in journalism, too, though not so strongly as in the heyday of the *New York Review of Books*, whose contributors were once described by a wag as being made up chiefly of mad dogs and Englishmen.

But literarily, Anglophilia, like England itself, has suffered enormous slippage. Today even hard-case Anglophiles are pressed to make a meal out of the meager literary leftovers in the English larder. The days of "Virginia" and "Morgan," "Evelyn" and "Cyril," thin though they may seem in retrospect, are done and gone. English literary journalism, once so special of its kind, has lost its lovely lilt. Whole issues of the *Times Literary Supple-*

Joseph Epstein, whose most recent book is *Plausible Prejudices*, contributed "E.B. White, Dark & Lite" to our April issue. He is the editor of the *American Scholar*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment, a journal whose importance to literary Anglophiles was once comparable to that of the *Racing Form* for horseplayers, are quite unreadable and might just as easily have been written by second-line American academics. The *New Statesman*, in its current condition, is not a paper one would want in the house. The *Spectator*, for all its reputed conservatism, cannot let go of its anti-Americanism and seems sadly parochial. English novelists rarely cause a stir; English poets seem chiefly to write for other English poets, like their American coevals. There are still English writers whom one cares about: Kingsley Amis, who has had the misfortune of never being able to top his first book, *Lucky Jim*; Anthony Powell, whose productivity does not slacken even as he enters his eighties; John Wain and Anita Brookner, and a few others. But the sense of a strong literary culture, of a tradition sturdy enough to ride out lean times, this in England seems to be—to adapt a title from a Philip Larkin poem about the sad passing of an older England—"Going, Going."

One hesitates to say "Gone," though Philip Larkin himself, in the same poem, comes close to saying it is all over for England:

> And that will be England gone,
> The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
> The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
> There'll be books; it will linger on
> In galleries; but all that remains
> For us will be concrete and tyres.

SOMETHING of this same note is struck, if less insistently, in the novels of Barbara Pym. "If we lamented the decay of the great civilizations of the past," a character in her novel *Less Than Angels* remarks, "should we not also regret the dreary levelling down of our own?" That Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin agreed on this general point ought not to be too surprising. They shared a great deal else besides. Although there was a nine-year difference in their ages—she was born in 1913, he in 1922—Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin seemed very much of the same generation. Both were solidly middle class and quite without interest in the social climb. Neither taught or regularly lectured or otherwise attempted to live off the luster of a literary career; both worked at middling cultural jobs—"toad work," in Larkin's phrase—reasonably divorced from literature: Barbara Pym as an assistant editor at the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Philip Larkin as the chief librarian at the University of Hull (where he directed a staff of more than a hundred). Although each was an extraordinary person, both prided themselves on living ordinary lives. He was a bachelor, she a spinster. Loneliness was a subject they shared, its pleasures as well as its pain. ("The position of the unmarried woman—unless, of course, she is somebody's mistress—is of no interest whatsoever to the readers of modern fiction," Barbara Pym noted in her diary.) Another of their common subjects was middle age; in American writing, middle age is not yet recognized as a subject—only as something to flee from.

The work of both Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin goes pretty thoroughly against the grain of much mainstream contemporary American writing. For those who know nothing of either writer, perhaps it would be helpful to note that the literary antonym of Philip Larkin is Allen Ginsberg and that of Barbara Pym is Erica Jong. The great recent subjects of American writing—the politics of alienation, sex considered as a branch of gymnastics, the unreality of contemporary life—are of no serious interest to them. If the distance between Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin and most recent American writers is vast, the affinities between the two English writers are many. Philip Larkin could conceivably be a character in a Barbara Pym novel, portions of Barbara Pym's life the subject of a Philip Larkin poem. (While in the hospital after a stroke, Barbara Pym recorded in her diary: "The mixed ward. The pathos of men in pyjamas and dressing gowns. Philip Larkin type subjects.")

Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, scarcely surprisingly, admired each other's writing. Shy, reserved, they had corresponded for fully fourteen years before meeting for the first time in 1975. ("May I say 'Philip,' if that is what people call you, or should we go through the academic convention of 'Philip Larkin' and 'Barbara Pym'?") But long before their first meeting, Philip Larkin encouraged and aided Barbara Pym. Both aid and encouragement were needed, for in 1963, after publishing six novels with the firm of Jonathan Cape, she was informed by her editor at Cape that the firm was now keener on books with a more contemporary tone. She was perhaps the clearest literary victim we have of the 1960's concentration on the political and the turbulent in literary production; as another editor was to tell her, in rejecting yet another of her novels, hers was "not the kind of novel to which people are turning."

Philip Larkin, who took the rejection of Barbara Pym's novels seriously, wrote a sharp letter to Charles Monteith, an important editor at Faber & Faber, about her situation. The heart of the letter reads:

> I feel it is a great shame if ordinary sane novels about ordinary sane people doing ordinary sane things can't find a publisher these days. This is the tradition of Jane Austen and Trollope, and I refuse to believe that no one wants its successors today. Why should I have to choose between spy rubbish, science fiction rubbish, Negro-homosexual rubbish, or dope-take nervous-breakdown rubbish? I like to read about people who have done nothing spectacular, who aren't beautiful and lucky, who try to behave well in the limited field of activity they command, but who can see, in the little autumnal moments of vision, that the so called "big" experiences of life are going to miss them; and I like to read about such things presented not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with self-pity or despair or romanticism, but with realistic firmness and even humour. That is in fact what the critics call the moral tone of the book. It seems to me the kind of writing a responsible publisher ought to support (that's you Charles!).

Bracing though that letter is to read today, it apparently had no greater effect when it was sent than a touch of bad conscience for its recipient. Barbara Pym spent fourteen years in the literary desert—she went that long without being able to get any new work published, while her old publisher, Jonathan Cape, was able to find room for the Beatle John Lennon (of whom Barbara Pym remarked that, with his long hair, he looked "like a very plain middle-aged Victorian female novelist," which is precisely what he looked like). Cape, Faber & Faber, Macmillan, Hamish Hamilton, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Longman's, Cassell, Chatto & Windus, Barrie and Jenkins: the dishonor roll of publishers who rejected Barbara Pym is a lengthy one. In all, twenty-one different publishers turned down her novel, *An Unsuitable Attachment,* most telling her it was nicely written but not at present their cup of tea.

Writing without any hope of publishing could not have been other than hell for Barbara Pym. At one point she attempted to alter her writing slightly to meet the market: "I am still going on with something, trying to make it less cosy without actually putting in the kind of thing that would be beyond my range (keep *that* and quote it in my biography, young man from the University of Texas!)." She worked at her job, she lived her life, but she had to think of writing novels as "a nice 'hobby' for one, like knitting." Larkin continued to come up with names of editors who might be sympathetic to her cause, and upon thanking him for the name of yet another such editor she could not resist adding, "If only somebody would have the courage to be unfashionable." Friends suggested that she set aside novels to write a biography. She regretted not having followed an academic career, though she knew it was too late to do anything about it. "By the way," she wrote to Philip Larkin in 1974, after more than ten years of not having any new work in print, "the letter I wrote to *The Author* about not getting published was never published, which seems to be the final accolade of failure."

The second reversal of fortune in Barbara Pym's career came in 1977—three years before she would die of cancer—when the *Times Literary Supplement* published a list, chosen by important literary figures of the day, of the most underrated writers of the 20th century. Barbara Pym was the only living writer to show up twice, having been mentioned both by Philip Larkin and by Lord David Cecil. It was the making of her. Macmillan rushed in to publish her unpublished novels; Cape began to republish her earlier novels. E.P. Dutton brought out all her work in the United States. She was published in Sweden. She was taught in universities. She was on the short list for the Booker Prize for fiction (won that year by Paul Scott's *Staying On*). Her novel, *The Sweet Dove Died,* was on the London *Sunday Times* best-seller list.

She delighted in the attention she was now receiving, yet even in triumph never lost her cool sense of the comedy of life. Writing to thank Philip Larkin after the Booker Prize dinner, she noted: "Don't bother to answer this—I don't expect or wish it. It's only just a heartfelt expression of thanks from the most overestimated novelist of 1977." The triumph was all too brief. She died on January 11, 1980. At the end, according to Hazel Holt, the editor of *A Very Private Eye,* Barbara Pym's autobiography in diaries and letters, "she was sustained, certainly, by her strong faith and still able, as she had been throughout her life, to draw comfort from small pleasures and ironies, and this is, perhaps, the greatest gift she has bequeathed to all who read her."

THE curve of Philip Larkin's career was very different—no abrupt swoops up and down, no dramatic reversals on the graph, but instead a slow yet steady upward line. After Larkin's death, at sixty-three on December 2, 1985, that line has continued to ascend. Larkin's has been a special place among modern poets. Poetry, over the course of Larkin's life, has gone from an art enjoyed by a small minority to an even smaller group of what can only be termed, somewhat comically, poetry professionals, made up of people who write or teach poetry. By design, Philip Larkin remained the poet for the nonprofessional.

The critic R.P. Blackmur once remarked that the work of any good modern poet issues in ambiguity; Philip Larkin, I strongly suspect, would not have concurred. T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound maintained that modern poetry must be difficult; Larkin, again, was not likely to have agreed. Larkin did something really quite extraordinary in the annals of contemporary poety: he managed to write seriously without being in the least ambiguous and to write beautifully without being at all difficult.

Poetry in our time has become almost wholly a university activity, but Philip Larkin is the poet who best survives the hothouse atmosphere of the classroom. My sense is that people who like Larkin's poetry do not like it merely; in fact, they adore it. Although there is nothing the least cult-inducing about Larkin's poetry, people who adore it tend to think of themselves in the way the narrator of Henry James's story, "The Next Time," thought of people with special literary tastes—as a group apart, a club, a band, "partakers of the same repose, who sit together in the shade of the tree, by the plash of the fountain, with the glare of the desert round us and no great vice that I know of but the habit perhaps of estimating people a little too much by what they think of a certain style."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But this Jamesian quotation may make Philip Larkin's poetry seem rather precious, ethereal even. It is quite the reverse; it is, in the root sense of the word, mundane. I should not go so far as to say that the following is characteristically Larkinesque, but in its combination of precision, prosiness, and beauty it is what one has come to expect from a Philip Larkin passage:

> Groping back to bed after a piss
> I part thick curtains, and am startled by
> The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness.

Larkin did not always have that combination in control. It was not until his second book of poems, *The Less Deceived* (1955), that, as he himself said, "Thoughts, feelings, language cohered and jumped." He had in fact begun as a novelist. "I wanted to 'be a novelist' in a way I never wanted to 'be a poet,' " he once remarked. "Novels seem to me to be richer, broader, deeper, more enjoyable than poems." He wrote and published two novels—*Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947)—while still in his early twenties, but could never complete a third. Neither of these is an important novel, and if Philip Larkin had not been their author both would have long since met the pulper's blade. But they are of interest in showing how precocious Larkin was and how little, temperamentally, he changed. The gift of precise yet startling phrasing was there from the outset: "The music was slow," runs a line from *Jill*, "with a logical sadness." From the outset, too, he had a penchant for the grim and the gray. Although he never claimed a terrified childhood, as a boy he stammered and was nearsighted, and of his parents, whom he described as "rather awkward people," he observed that they were "not very good at being happy." Lugubrious Larkin ever was, but—and herein lies part of his distinction—wittily lugubrious. Larkin could be dour and funny at the same time because he knew he was by nature dour and that there was nothing to be done but laugh about it. "Deprivation is for me," he once told an interviewer, "what daffodils were for Wordsworth."

Part of the appeal of both Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin is their solid common sense. Not a quality in notably abundant supply among writers of our day, common sense; so rare is it that, coming upon it in books, one is inclined to greet it as a radical new trait. Yet it is by the dictates of common sense that most of us attempt to live our lives, in decency and honor. As Barbara Pym at one point remarks about James Baldwin's novel *Another Country*, "One is so really glad never to have had the chance of that kind of life." And one can say the same of the lives lived in the novels of Norman Kurt Updike or Philip Márquez Doctorow, which, with their violence, sex, and politics, come to seem, from the perspective of a certain age, like the Hardy boys with an X-rating. Apart from the X, such books do not seem quite appropriate for grownups.

Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin appear to have been grownups early in life. For the subject of her first novel, *Some Tame Gazelle*, Barbara Pym drew a portrait modeled on her sister and herself at middle age that in many ways turned out to be prophetic: in it she is a spinster, her sister divorced, and they are living together, as they in fact did for the better part of their adult lives. John Wain, in an autobiographical volume entitled *Sprightly Running*, recalls Philip Larkin at Oxford serving as a model for him because of Larkin's seriousness, "his ironic self-effacement, [and] rock-like determination to do whatever it might be necessary to do in order to write well." Although Larkin found his tone early, he did not find his subject quite so quickly. His first volume of poetry, *The North Ship* (1945), was written under the influence of Yeats and was an obvious mistake, forcing him into false sensitivity ("The walking of girls' vulnerable feet") and Yeatsian music ("If hands could free you, heart,/Where would you fly?") that he simply did not have the pipes to play. The poems in *The North Ship* are brief, but, alas, not brief enough, as Larkin himself knew. In an introduction written for a reissue of the book in 1965, Larkin wrote, "As a coda I have added a poem, written a year or so later, which, though not noticeably better than the rest, shows the Celtic fever abated and the patient sleeping soundly."

Neither Barbara Pym nor Philip Larkin shows any long or intricate lines of development. (It was E.M. Forster who said that, after a certain age, one ceases to be interested in development but only in masterpieces.) Barbara Pym wrote Pymish novels right out of the starting gate, though some of her books, particularly *A Quartet in Autumn*, a novel about the terrors of superannuation, grew darker as she grew older. Once Larkin had shaken off the idea of himself as a novelist—"Novels," he once said, "are about other people and poems are about yourself"—and had fought free of the influence of Yeats, he found his mature and steady and unchanging voice. Thomas Hardy was a crucial figure for him, teaching him, as he put it, "not to be afraid of the obvious." When poems no longer came to him, as happened in the last decade of his life, he stopped writing.

Although both Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin worked on the periphery of academic life—she at her anthropological institute, he at the Hull library—neither was by any serious measure an academic. Characters who are anthropologists figure in several of Barbara Pym's novels, and she sometimes comments on the similarities shared by anthropologists and novelists, but her settings are not university ones. Larkin obviously knew a great deal about university life, but with two exceptions, the poems "Posterity" and "Vers de Societé," the academic life is not his subject, either. Both felt the need of a regular job; neither

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever played full time at being "the writer." Larkin remarked with some pride that he "never read my poems in public, never lectured on poetry, never taught anyone how to write it." He once told an interviewer from the *Observer* that it would embarrass him very much to become, in effect, a public poet by giving lectures and readings on a regular basis. "I don't want to go around," he said, very Larkinly, "pretending to be me."

Doctrine seems to have been of little interest to either Barbara Pym or Philip Larkin. Freudianism plays no part in their work, and both wrote as if Marxism never existed. Larkin called himself a right-winger; by this he meant that he identified the Right with the virtues of thrift, hard work, reverence, and the desire to preserve. If Barbara Pym had any politics, I do not know what they might have been. In "Homage to a Government," in his book *High Windows* (1974), Larkin writes, sadly, about England's withdrawal from the world: "It's hard to say who wanted it to happen,/But now it's been decided nobody minds." But politics are far from Larkin's central concern. If any two writers can be said to occupy the zone where art is not invaded by politics, Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin are those writers.

What combination of social conditions, personal temperament, and tension between artistic traditions and ephemeral trends turns writers in one or another direction? It varies in nearly every case. But Barbara Pym, the daughter of a solicitor, who came of age during the depression, and Philip Larkin, the son of a civil servant, who came of age during World War II, both took the world pretty much as they found it. Perhaps growing up in somewhat straitened circumstances—as Larkin noted of his own generation at Oxford: "At an age when self-importance would have been normal, events cut us ruthlessly down to size"—put a hitch in the expectations of both writers. Perhaps both felt themselves less than dazzlingly equipped for happiness in life.

Whatever the case, Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, without making any great fuss about it, wrote against the grain of their times. For all that the world reverences artists, for the most part they are quite as much the slaves of their time as the rest of us, moving in packs, responding to trends, joining movements, acting in concert. Even an avant-garde remains a garde—a number of people marching together, however far out in front of their contemporaries, but still a number. But Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, each in her and his respective line, marched quite alone.

"Description," said Wallace Stevens, "is revelation." In her subtle, ironic, dead-on accurate novels, Barbara Pym endlessly describes: clothes, furniture, gardens, houses, food. Although she always has a story to tell, plot somehow is not quite paramount. Not that things fail to happen: people die, rather less frequently they marry, they pay their small courtesies, and those who have not already given it up as a bad job search to give some purpose to their lives through doing things for others. The compass in a Pym novel is kept narrow. Barbara Pym characters go off to their jobs, lunch carefully, sometimes have a boiled egg with their tea, take comfort from hot milky drinks, and put out of mind as best they can that life can be as "empty as the house one was coming back to." As a character in *Some Tame Gazelle* puts it, "Today has been rather trying, it has really—too much happening." Most days are given over to doing dull undramatic things: shopping, cooking, eating, washing-up, then up to bed to read a few pages of a novel by Charlotte M. Yonge or perhaps a poem or two in a sound anthology of 17th-century verse. The following day may provide a jumble sale or a conference on copy editing or a tour of a manor house. England has never seemed smaller.

It ought to be excruciatingly dull, but it never is. Barbara Pym writes novels of the kind that, in her own novel *Jane and Prudence*, one of her characters is said to like: "Well written and tortuous, with a good dash of culture and the inevitable unhappy or indefinite ending, which was so like life." Missing from this formulation, if the correspondence to a Pym novel is to be reasonably complete, is the element of humor. In a Barbara Pym novel strict attention must be paid, lest a quiet cultivated joke pass over one's head. In *An Unsuitable Attachment*, for example, a book in a non-circulating social-science library is discovered to have a red food stain. " 'Of course,' said Mervyn thoughtfully, 'it could just be a genuine tomato sauce from a dish of spaghetti or ravioli. Yet it is difficult to imagine anyone reading Talcott Parsons and manipulating spaghetti at the same time.' " The reference to Talcott Parsons, whose prose could so often be the stylistic equivalent of spaghetti, is exactly right. But then Barbara Pym always gets such things exactly right. In *Some Tame Gazelle*, a single line—a single adverb, actually—sinks a character forever: " 'I shall never understand women,' said Dr. Parnell complacently." In *A Glass of Blessings*, a woman remarks that knitting can be a useful occupation, especially since one can do it while talking. " 'I wonder if women brought their knitting when Oscar Wilde talked,' said Piers. 'I daresay not,' said Sybil calmly, 'but that doesn't mean they wouldn't have liked to.' " As I say, careful attention must be paid.

IN HER novels Barbara Pym has created a world, by which I mean she has created characteristic scenes and situations and characters that are like no others and yet feel absolutely true. Whether art imitates life, or things work the other way 'round, remains a serious question, but traveling in England one notices a woman bringing flowers to a church, or two middle-aged women running a tearoom, or a vicar with an abstracted air being led by a wire-haired

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terrier, and one cannot view them as other than escapees from a Barbara Pym novel.

Within these novels, different characters show up in different books: a young graduate student in anthropology in *Less Than Angels* is a full-blown professor reading a eulogy to a colleague in *A Few Green Leaves*; a feckless widower in *Jane and Prudence* shows up in the obituary column of a rector in *A Few Green Leaves*; a rather steady-seeming husband in *A Glass of Blessings* turns out to have had a brief affair with Prudence from *Jane and Prudence*. These small connections between novels give Barbara Pym's body of work something of the feeling of an *oeuvre*. Most of her novels run to roughly 250 pages, yet in each of them she manages to make ten or twelve characters come alive, switching points of view, interweaving stories, making the kinds of interconnections that are the hallmark of the true novelist.

Barbara Pym is a very feminine but very far from a conventionally feminist writer. Despite all the interest in writing by women, her novels are unlikely to turn up on an authorized feminist reading list. A novel entitled *Excellent Women* guarantees that; it is about those women who "are not for marrying" but content themselves doing good works for their parish or friends or strangers—women ready to accept a secondary role in life. Such women crop up in almost all of Barbara Pym's novels. "It was sad," thinks the leading character in *No Fond Return of Love*, "how women longed to be needed and useful and how seldom most of them really were." Her title *Some Tame Gazelle* comes from a minor English poet, who wrote: "Some tame gazelle, or some gentle dove:/Something to love, oh, something to love!" A male character in *An Unsuitable Attachment* reflects, "How convenient women were . . . the way they were always 'just going' to make coffee or tea or perhaps had just roasted a joint in the oven or made a cheese soufflé." And if such passages would cook Miss Pym's goose among the feminists, the following line, from *Less Than Angels*, would deep-fry it: "Yes, of course women do think the worst of each other, perhaps because only they can know what they are capable of." And that line is given to a woman we are obviously intended to admire.

At the same time Barbara Pym partakes of what I think of as the superior feminism. As opposed to the conventional feminism that finds men to be exploitative brutes, out to do women in at every turn, harsh, oppressive, vicious, the superior feminism finds men to be rather amusing creatures who are not quite to be taken seriously. Men in Barbara Pym novels tend to be bumbling, out-of-it clergymen who might almost have strayed over from an Evelyn Waugh novel, self-important anthropologists, vain widowers, charming and handsome younger men who often turn out to be homosexual. They cannot be held quite responsible, really, for they are rather like large children. "Perhaps it was a mistake to have any kind of serious conversation when eating," thinks the heroine of *Some Tame Gazelle*, "or even anywhere in mixed company." Time and again men are rather gently put in their place. "Who could imagine a man who was *never* boring or irritating?" thinks Jane in *Jane and Prudence*. " 'A rare person?' echoed Miss Randall [in *No Fond Return of Love*]. 'A rather good-looking man who has made a mess of his marriage, by all accounts—I shouldn't have thought that was rare at all.' " "One does feel that men need company more than women do." "Men appeared to be so unsubtle. . . ." "Women are prepared to take trouble with sour and difficult things [gooseberries, in this instance], whereas men would hardly think it worthwhile." "Men do seem to require meat with their meal." Read enough Barbara Pym and men and women come to seem as if they are not merely different but of different phyla. And yet, like tame gazelles, men are needed as something to love.

If Barbara Pym's characters seem sometimes to dwell on trivialities—on meals, on churchgoing, on pottering about in the garden—it is not only because life is chiefly made up of trivialities but because they provide comfort in lives that often hide great sorrows, disappointments, lost opportunities. Life can bruise, her novels show, and no one should assume that he has a monopoly on suffering. Everyone must fight loneliness in the best way he can. Not even marriage is a sure protection against loneliness. "Mild, kindly looks and spectacles, thought Jane [in *Jane and Prudence*]; this is what it [marriage] all came to in the end." Or as Catherine, in *A Glass of Blessings*, notes when looking for a book that will take her out of herself after her young man has left her, "The only real book of devotion she had, suitably enough from her headmistress, told her that we are strangers and pilgrims here and must endure the heart's banishment, and she felt that she knew that anyway."

"Miss Pym's novels may look like 'women's books,' " Philip Larkin wrote, "but no man can read them and be quite the same again." That is true. What is also true is that Barbara Pym's novels—comic and sad, bright and dark as each of them all at once manages to be—seem a working out of a passage written many years earlier by Edith Wharton, a novelist, so far as is known, whom she may never have read:

> I have sometimes thought that a woman's nature is like a great house full of rooms: there is the hall, through which everyone passes in going in and out; the drawing room, where one receives formal visits; the sitting room, where the members of the family come and go as they like; but beyond that, far beyond, are other rooms, the handles of whose doors are never turned, no one knows whither they lead; and in the innermost room, the holy of holies, the soul sits alone and waits for a footstep that never comes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip Larkin wrote, briefly, about Barbara Pym, but Barbara Pym, who wrote no criticism nor did any reviewing, never wrote about Philip Larkin. In her last novel, *A Few Green Leaves*, a mother regrets that her daughter "was not better read in English Literature, with all the comfort it could give. A few sad Hardy poems, a little Eliot, a line of Larkin seemed inadequate solace." She, of course, herself read not a line but all of Larkin's poetry and was greatly enamored of it. In her diary she noted: "What is the point of saying (as if for posterity) what Philip is *like*. He is so utterly what he is in his letters and poems." And in a letter to him, written when she had a little more than six months to live, she said: "I had such a nice letter from the USA asking me to 'lecture,' but won't go. It is [from] Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the man who wrote had got on to my novels because of his interest in *your* work! A nice thought." It is a nice thought, and a smart one, for, literarily and spiritually, the two writers were as brother and sister.

THE shape of their two careers, as I have noted, was very different. After the youthful publication of his two novels and the false step of his first volume of poems, Larkin patiently awaited the maturation of his poetic talent, which was in full bloom by his early thirties with the publication of *The Less Deceived* in 1955. Although he was a contemporary and friend of Kingsley Amis—who claims to have got the idea for *Lucky Jim* when visiting Larkin who was working as a librarian at University College, Leicester—Larkin was not included in the band of Angry Young Men, the journalistic label grafted on to the generation of Amis, John Osborne, John Wain, and John Braine, though Larkin shared that generation's taste for jazz, detective fiction, and deadpan comedy. Living and working in Hull, the parliamentary seat of Andrew Marvell, he was part of no literary community, no poetry clique, no political cause. He did a certain amount of reviewing—"hack work," he invariably called it —and worked away at his poems, which won him a small but devoted and steadily increasing following.

Perhaps the reason Larkin seemed to take a certain pride in never having taught or lectured on poetry or given readings of his own poetry is that, by not doing so, he removed himself from the poetry-university-subsidy nexus. Nor has his poetry been frequently put under the knife of critical dissection, like T.S. Eliot's "patient etherized upon a table." Unlike that of so many modern poets, from Wallace Stevens to John Ashbery, Philip Larkin's poetry is available for enjoyment without aid of windy explication, reader's manuals, slides, road maps, computer print-outs. He himself strongly felt that the writing and reading of poetry ought to be a pleasure. "To write a poem is a pleasure: sometimes I deliberately let it compete in the open market, so to speak, with other spare-time activities, ostensibly on the grounds that if a poem isn't more entertaining to write than listening to records or going out it won't be entertaining to read." In a brief piece entitled "The Pleasure Principle," he noted that "if a poet loses his pleasure-seeking audience he has lost the only audience worth having, for which the dutiful mob that signs on every September is no substitute." His own critical guide, enunciated when he was a judge for the Booker Prize in England, has nothing of the smell of the seminar room:

> Personally, I found myself asking four questions about every book: Could I read it? If I could read it, did I believe it? If I believed it, did I care about it? And if I cared about it, what was the quality of my caring, and would it last?

About nearly everything Larkin wrote, prose and poetry, there is this same no-nonsense, come-off-it tone. It is the tone of the philistine—but the philistine with a difference: the philistine with the authority behind him of having written some of the great poems of the age. There are after all times when philistinism, if propelled by common sense and not by an animus against art, can be valuable, and ours may be such a time. Who would have thought—recalled, rather—that poetry, its composition and its comprehension, ought to give pleasure? Or in thinking about Sylvia Plath, how useful to be reminded, as Larkin commonsensically reminds us, that "mad poets do not write about madness. . . . Plath did: it was her subject, her *donnée* ('I do it exceptionally well'); together they played an increasingly reckless game of tag." The world could use more such philistines.

There can be no gainsaying how deep this strain ran in Philip Larkin, and until one understands how deep it did one cannot hope to understand how strongly Larkin's aesthetic views went against the spirit of the age. These views are given their most comprehensive form not in any of Larkin's writings about poetry but instead in the introduction to *All What Jazz*, the collection of pieces on jazz that he wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* between 1961 and 1971. For Larkin, jazz took a turn—a nasty turn—with the ascendancy of the saxophonist Charlie Parker and the musicians who followed in his trail. There was, in Larkin's view, something meant to upset in the tense febrile music of these men. Theirs was not, Larkin puts it, "the music of happy men," as so much of the jazz of their precursors seemed. "I used to think that anyone hearing a Parker record would guess he was a drug addict, but no one hearing Beiderbecke would think he was an alcoholic, and that this summed up the distinction between the kinds of music." Later, of course, it grew worse; and with musicians like John Coltrane "jazz started to be *ugly on purpose*" (Larkin's emphasis).

Larkin, who grew up loving jazz, found him-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self unable to enjoy this new work, which critics informed him was revolutionary and spoke for our time and yet was traditional in the best and deepest sense. "I hadn't realized that jazz had gone from Lascaux to Jackson Pollock in fifty years," he writes, tongue squarely in his cheek. "All I am saying is that the term 'modern,' when applied to art, has a more than chronological meaning: it denotes a quality of irresponsibility peculiar to this century, known sometimes as modernism, and once I had classified modern jazz under this heading I knew where I was." As for how modern art has come to this pass, Larkin writes:

> My own theory is that it is related to an imbalance between the two tensions from which art springs: these are the tension between the artist and his material, and between the artist and his audience, and that in the last seventy-five years or so the second of these has slackened or even perished. In consequence the artist has become over-concerned with his material (hence an age of technical experiment), and, in isolation, has busied himself with the two principal themes of modernism, mystification and outrage. Piqued at being neglected, he has painted portraits with both eyes on the same side of the nose, or smothered a model with paint and rolled her over a blank canvas. He has designed a dwelling-house to be built underground. He has written poems resembling the kind of pictures typists make with their machines during the coffee break, or a novel in gibberish, or a play in which the characters sit in dustbins. He has made a six-hour film of someone asleep. He has carved human figures with large holes in them. And parallel to this activity ("every idiom has its idiot," as an American novelist has written) there has grown up a kind of critical journalism designed to put it over.

Do understand, Philip Larkin is not merely a pre-Carnaby Street Englishman, left behind by the art of his day. It goes back farther and runs deeper. "My dislike of Pound and Picasso, both of whom predate me by a considerable margin, can't be explained in this way," he wrote. "The same can be said of Henry Moore and James Joyce (a textbook case of declension from talent to absurdity). No, I dislike such things not because they are new, but because they are irresponsible exploitations of technique in contradiction of human life as we know it. This is my essential criticism of modernism, whether perpetrated by Parker, Pound, or Picasso: it helps us neither to enjoy nor endure."

One might be able to dismiss all this as crankishness and a hatred of the modern if Philip Larkin did not in his own poetry provide such splendid examples of the kind of art that he admired. Obviously the art he aspired to is not cheerful art; nor was he looking for reassuring messages about the dignity of humankind. It is instead an art in which the demands of technique are met—the pleasurable struggle, in poetry, among rhythm and meter and the meaning of words—but in which technique never overwhelms content. It is an art in which the ironic, the comic, the understated, the fearlessly honest are given full play, while the shocking and the deliberately hideous are excluded. Excitement in such an art derives from precision of language and subtlety of sentiment, not from tension. A poem must not merely be but mean.

The standard line about Philip Larkin is that he is above all the poet of human limitation, and there is some truth to this—within limits. It does not, however, quite comprehend the extent of Larkin's spiritual isolation. His friends—Kingsley Amis, John Wain, Barbara Pym—speak of him with a touching combination of affection and reverence. He was nonetheless a solitary man, one of nature's true bachelors. Barbara Pym, who regretted and finally reconciled herself to not marrying, can be said to have been unlucky in love; Philip Larkin, so far as is known, cannot be said to have advanced to the stage where he could even be called unlucky. The twelve-line poem "Talking in Bed" ends: "It becomes still more difficult to find/Words at once true and kind,/Or not untrue and not unkind." The poem "Self's the Man" ("Only I'm a better hand/At knowing what I can stand/Without them sending a van—/Or suppose I am.") reinforces one's sense of Larkin's radical isolation. And his powerful poem "Mr. Bleaney," about a single man, living alone in a furnished room, spending his summer holidays at Frinton, Christmas with his sister at Stoke, reverberates with the sadness of human solitude. A stammerer as a boy, increasingly deaf in middle age—Larkin's life neatly conspired to set him apart and keep him there. What is impressive is the way that he was able to generalize his own apartness into persuasive poems about the isolation, the loneliness, that is part of the condition of us all. The magic of his art was to have brought a kind of grandeur to life viewed from the bed-sitter under the attic. How he did this is baffling, but, as Kingsley Amis has written of Philip Larkin, "This kind of bafflement is a normal response to an artist of the first rank."

Larkin wrote that "The essence of [the poet's] gifts is to recreate the familiar, and it is from the familiar that he draws his strength." T.S. Eliot, writing about Andrew Marvell, said that the poet possesses the ability to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. But Larkin did something rather different: he made the familiar important. His poetry was anti-romantic, anti-rhetorical, ending neither in mystification (see the works of John Ashbery) nor in outrage (see those of Allen Ginsberg), but in plain and powerful truth-telling. His poetry exhibited his incapacity for self-delusion. Within the confines of the most careful meter and charming rhymes, writing always in a persuasive mature voice, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was able to formulate home truths of a kind that poetry in our day has too often neglected, as in these lines from "Continuing to Live":

This loss of interest, hair, and enterprise—
Ah, if the game were poker, yes,
You might discard them, draw a full house!
But it's chess.

There was no want of bleakness in Larkin's poetry, often covered over by wit, as in "This Be The Verse," with its often quoted opening line about your mum and dad, but which ends:

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself.

Yearning is a strong element in Larkin, who once described his childhood as "a forgotten boredom" and who wrote that "the realization that it was not people I dislike but children was for me one of those moments of revelation." He yearns for the youth that is gone, the release from constraint that he was too old to join in —"Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three/(Which was rather late for me)"—while being unable to live completely in the present and fearing the death that awaits in the future. He seems to have had the gift—the curse?—of perpetual middle age. To say that intimations of mortality touch everything that Larkin wrote is putting it too lightly. There are the ambulances that "come to rest at any kerb/All streets in time are visited." Religion, "That vast moth-eaten musical brocade/Created to pretend we never die/" is no help, nor is rationalism. As the last four lines of "Dockery and Son" have it:

Life is first boredom, then fear.
Whether or not we use it, it goes,
And leaves what something hidden from us chose,
And age, and then only the end of age.

THIS all ought to be immensely depressing, and yet, somehow, it is not. On the contrary, it is, somehow, consoling, as are the novels of Barbara Pym. A.N. Wilson, in an obituary article, wrote that "Larkin found the perfect voice for expressing our worst fears." Perhaps the reason is that he expressed these fears so perfectly, writing fearlessly about the universal fear of oblivion. How like a human being to be certain of his extinction, beside which nothing else matters, and yet to create a poem about it, which does matter. "Aubade," which for me is Philip Larkin's single most beautiful poem, a poem in which a man awakes in the middle of the night to contemplate his own approaching death ("Being brave/Lets no one off the grave"), ends on this passage of qualified but real knowledge that life goes on:

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
Have always known, know that we can't escape,
Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, two at first glimpse small-gauged but finally essential writers, are both quintessentially, untranslatably English. One cannot imagine their novels and poems having been produced in the United States, or Latin America, or Israel, or any other European country. Writing after the end of England's heroic age, laboring in the neutral zone of art where politics do not matter and public events are of negligible interest, they were able to produce work that concentrates wholly on the simple but frequently forgotten condition of being human: on loneliness and yearning and death and on the small but crucial pleasures that make life bearable. Anglophilia may well be dead, but if the nation that gave rise to it can continue to produce writers of the special quality of Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, then long live England.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Staged 60's

A Story

Louis Rapoport

IN THE fast-moving life he led, Bill Spielman never strayed far from the old friends he had made along the way. He believed in keeping in touch across the Great Divide, even if it meant only once every few years.

When he called me from California sounding high on drink or drugs, I was frantically preoccupied with shoring up the snow-laden roof of my century-old Jerusalem house. I hadn't spoken to Bill in several years, not since I'd paid a long visit to California and he had vilified me for living in Israel and "missing the boat." But suddenly, hearing from him, it seemed like twenty years ago, when he could make me cry with laughter, or shock me out of my paranoid mind-set with ferocious insights. Scenes from the 60's played behind both our voices, for we had been character actors in the theater of Haight Street—survivors, somehow, of St. Vitus's dance.

A lingering memory was of the sudden death of Bill's mother in July 1968, when she fell victim to an Alien Monster. No, I'm not exaggerating—I felt it was nothing less than that. Bill had thought it strange but not spooky, just a freakish death in the family. But to my mind then, it was like the two hundred coincidences of *Doctor Zhivago*, a ridiculous plot that is the mother of illumination. In the 60's, Bill had called it karma, the principle of causality. Now, as we entered the 80's, and his father too was dead, it was simply the reality of dust to dust.

Bill's telephone patter leaped back and forth between stories about the enticing film world on whose fringes he existed and the loss of his beloved father.

Bill Spielman, who had acquired the sobriquet "Spiderman" in his teens because of the sound of his last name and his gangly appearance, had long been recognized as an accomplished artist, a man bristling with energy and talent. In the 60's he was continually talking it up, constantly on the move, a close friend of the people at the core of what was called "the scene." He drew beautiful posters, and had made some memorable 16mm films. But he never managed to graduate to bigger things. Now he was making an unglamorous $70,000 a year, a slick commercial artist, but it was a constant struggle, and he was as short of money as when he had lived on $10,000 a year in poster royalties. His electrifying graphics and drawings still paid the bills, but he felt he was a failure because he couldn't break into the film world, his only real passion. In our different ways, we had both always hungered to make a movie, and often talked about doing one together: *The Untold Story of the Sixties.*

"TELL you what's happening, man. Your old Beverly High buddy Bob Kahn asked me to work on a film about a circus in Florida. I told him I'd love to do it, and then I read the script. It read like silly-putty, man. I couldn't *understand* it. It didn't make no sense. He had a big backer in New York, then he showed him the script . . . and the guy just disappeared. Kahn's *cuhrazzzzzy*. I like him, but he goes off into space. Speaking of freaks in Florida, that's where he was dying, my old man. I was there last week, got a chance to see him and say good-bye before he popped off."

Mr. Spielman—I never knew his first name—had been dying for six months in a giant hospital and old-age complex. "Wow, man, my father was six-feet-two and his weight was down to about eighty pounds and his knees knocked together and he couldn't walk no more." Bill had watched him across the dinner table miss his cup of coffee with a spoonful of sugar. "I mean he just missed it, man. He was lucky he got the spoon in the sugar bowl. And when he wasn't dozing off and falling asleep, I held his hand. You know what it was like? Seeing *all* of the early part of my life, all of my youth, and like seeing the last few weeks of my own life, the last few minutes."

Bill had been having nightmares, waking up crying at night. He'd been dreaming of embracing his old man, telling him all the things he'd never had a chance to tell him during the thirty-

LOUIS RAPOPORT is a senior editor at the Jerusalem *Post*. His most recent book, *Redemption Song: The Story of Operation Moses*, has just been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, which in October will also bring out a book he has co-authored and edited, *Anatoly and Avital Shcharansky: A Journey Home*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eight years they had known each other. But it went unsaid. He made his farewells to his father in a spotless chamber in the East Wing. It was early morning, and Bill and his wife Wanda had a noon flight to New York. "My father was lying on his side. He just kind of had this look into nothingness, this look into space. He knew it was the last time we'd see each other."

Bill's father was a Jew and his mother was Irish. Bill was every inch his father's son—a tall, white-faced man with curly black hair and slumping posture. Bill's conversation, like his father's, was punctuated with the expressions of a streetwise New Yorker. But Bill never considered himself a Jew, and according to Jewish law he was right.

Still, I could never accept that reality, and for his part, Bill thought I was "too" Jewish. In the years we were close friends, he often told me that my biggest problem was that I was overly aware of being a Jew. (The other problem, he said, was that I was a "Communist" because I had "views" about politics. My guilt was compounded by the fact that I gave away a successful business, "like a Commie would.")

Bill and Wanda left Florida two days before Mr. Spielman's death. After a stopover in New York, they flew first class to LA on a DC-10, in order to lift their spirits. Both he and Wanda, a skinny, resilient young woman who had come to Hollywood from New Canaan, got stoned on Quaaludes, drank champagne, and gorged themselves on roast beef. "It was a boss flight. I was so together that I even repaired the plane's movie projector. It was all thanks to my old man—I got all of his Quaaludes and Percodan—he didn't feel a thing."

SPIELMAN grieved in his own fashion, talking tough, laughing it off. His father had had no money to leave him. Bill was plagued with money problems, and that was what constantly occupied his thoughts. He was also having trouble with the landlady, who didn't like Wanda or their cat, and who was harassing him because he hadn't paid last month's rent. "But it's a beautiful day here, man, really unusually clear for LA, the Hollywood Hills etched in, like razor sharp. You say snow in Jerusalem? I never imagined it that way. Just a bunch of camels, right? And bombs going off everywhere. Say, baby, why don't you get *out* of there, man? Why ain't you banging out a treatment? Hey, I'd love to make that dynamite movie. Did you ever see the photo I took on Haight Street of this bum pointing a Brownie camera at me with an old Kodak flash and his fucked-up smashed-up dirty funky fingers clutching a religious pamphlet and a crumpled cigarette? That's how I'm going to start our flick. Listen—they're turning out by the millions for movies, snappy returns for investors *now*, sweetheart. The more flipped out everything gets, the more they go to the movies. And this is movietown. Still hanging out with a lot of film people. By osmosis, rubbing up against it; I'm talking it up and getting something going."

He saw movie material everywhere, and had written a dozen scripts himself, paying a freelance editor to fix up his English—Bill had dropped out of a slummy vocational high school at age fifteen. "Hey, man, down the hall is a whole other world. The guy's a young gay cat, goes to art school, and I was returning a stool I'd borrowed. His boyfriend's in there unfurling a full Nazi flag like from the 30's. I was shocked, and the guy said, jokingly like, 'Don't let Spielman see this.' You know, thinking I'm Jewish. I said something like, 'Too bad, what a brilliant graphic image and Hitler buried it forever.' Far out scene. But it can't happen down the hall, not in Hancock Park—right, man? It rang all kinds of bells: homosexual, young art students, Los Zangelez. Kids—they like the swastika symbol; they're hip and cool, they smoke pot. Hey, I don't want you getting paranoid again. I know the guy's all right. He's a sort of revolutionary whose father's number-two man on the LA Vice Squad. So I know the guy's okay 'cause he sells me lids."

The Nazi reference brought to mind Terry Hawke, who had been with us when we formed an artists' company in the 60's. Terry, creator of the nationally-syndicated "Hot Rodder" comic strip at age eighteen, went on to help usher in the Aquarian Age, and after that, became a born-again Christian. Now, an era later, he was a follower of a neo-Nazi artist, whose paintings were copies of bohemian artist A. Hitler's decadent watercolors, only done on a grand scale. Bill informed me that Terry's wife, a fellow artist, had bought him a birthday present—a Nazi flag similar to the one down the hall. I wasn't sure why Bill was telling me all this. He obviously disapproved, but at the same time he continued to mock what he'd always called "Jewish paranoia."

"Well, that's the skinny from Hollywood, Barry baby. Wanda says I got to get off, that this call's going to cost us a hundred bucks. Hang in there."

A month later, Spielman sent me a pin his father had left him, a gold Jewish star with a small diamond in the middle. It was for my little boy, Bill wrote. His father had always worn it when he'd go stepping out with his red-haired Irish rose from Hell's Kitchen.

Bill believed that his mother's sudden death in 1968 was a karmic punishment, the sins of the son visited on the mother. I shall never forget how it happened, how he got the news.

IT WAS the hottest day of the year. A desert wind blowing up from the distant Mojave like the evil African *harmattan*, enveloping cool San Francisco. The weather was so unusual that it made the *Chronicle* banner, July 13, 1968. Inventor-industrialist-art patron Dr.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Phineas Sutter had invited the leading hip poster artists—Terry Hawke, Spielman, Art Mills, Tom Belasco, and a soft-spoken man known as Turtle —to feast and swim at his palatial home on the Peninsula. The big bash was to celebrate the success of their major exhibit at his gilded Union Street art gallery. There were forty of us: the artists and their families and friends.

Dr. Sutter's estate, overlooking what later became known as Silicon Valley, was the biggest jewel in a crown of mansions set among a ridge of pale-blue California hills. The sunlight was blinding as we emerged from our caravanserai of Volkswagens and gypsy vans, all of us having casually taken Purple Haze on the highway going down.

The wild-looking group oozed through a cathedral-sized living room and a spacious, ultra-modern stainless-steel kitchen—where Filipino and Nicaraguan servants were preparing lunch—and out to the pool area. From the moment we arrived, I was rigid with paranoia, sensing that there was something unearthly about the plants in front of the house. The swollen green pods and creepers sent chills through my body on this hottest of days. The flies seemed to stick on people forever. The pool, inlaid with red bricks and Mexican tiles and filled with emerald-green water, was surrounded by unreal hillocks of closely cropped grass, terraces with weeping willows, exotic flowers, lush tropical vegetation. It was like climbing over a wall and discovering a movie-set world on the other side.

I told Spielman and Turtle that they had best stay out of the pool, that it was oil-heavy water, poisoned with Babylonian chlorine that would clog our pores like glue, a weird concoction devised by a sinister scientist whose radioactive appliances were becoming essential to the modern American. He was a man who could invent water that's not wet and fire that's not hot. Obviously, magic like that was not possessed by ordinary men.

The people in our group sunbathed on the expanses of tightly manicured lawn around the pool. Other hippies, or their facsimiles, were everywhere. A strange man whom no one knew was surveying the scene: he wore suspenders and baggy gray tweed slacks—inconceivable on such a hot day. Ray Billings, Sutter's PR flack whom he had hired away from the Oakland *Tribune*, appeared to me as a little devil's helper in the pool, smirking and bobbing and pinching the water from his nose. His demonic eyebrows—curled upward by the process of aging—were matted against his forehead. Crawling fear and nausea were overwhelming me, but I struggled to stay on top of it. The artists and their women and friends were walking around in acid slow motion, eating watermelon or water chestnuts wrapped in bacon, drinking champagne.

Spielman looked particularly pale and New Yorkerish in the torrid California setting. Seeing me mesmerized and in distress, he hammed it up, grossing out with a slice of watermelon in one hand and a pear in the other, slurping away and advising me to "let the pig grease drip from your chin, man. Enjoy it!" He turned to Turtle. "Me and Minnie'll make him smile."

"Who's Minnie?" Turtle asked.

"See that little gem over there? That's Sutter's nubile teenage daughter. She's not just jail bait; she spells genuine *danger*." Then he looked at me. "Am I right, man? Did you check it out on your paranoia meter?" She seemed every bit as unreal as her soft and snow-white father floating in the pool like a plastic cube. Her skin was drawn drum-tight across her face. Her eyes were clear "purey" marbles, monster eyes designed by special effects.

Innocent Turtle tried to calm me. "Sutter's okay, man; he's just a good businessman. He's using us and we're using him."

TURTLE, Art Mills, and especially Tom Belasco, the slickest of the artists, had been most fervently in favor of participating in Sutter's exhibit, which had been launched at a huge party the previous weekend. Dr. Sutter's Hillsborough friends and Nob Hill society mingled with the cream of San Francisco hipdom in a riot of feathers and elegant silk dresses, cocaine and champagne, sexual giggles and prancing egos. I was sorry I had gone along. But now I was determined to break up the party. "We got to get out of here!" I whispered to Turtle, explaining that we were in hell, that Sutter was not a human being but just another droopy green pod transplanted from Venus or Uranus. He was getting away with it! The enchanter sat among the hip aristocracy, a silver-haired fox whose horn-rimmed glasses dominated his ashen face, an ordinary American who would go unnoticed in the streets. Pretty clever.

I looked for Spielman, but he had vanished, along with the girl. "Spiderman got her," Turtle reported, smiling gently, "He's driving her back to the city." I wasn't listening. My hair was standing on end as I watched Dr. Sutter, and Turtle then recalled that he too was feeling uncomfortable. "It's freaky, not where I want to be at all, man. Shit, you really think Dr. Sutter's from another planet?"

Turtle, who had often put me down for being "too Berkeley" because I had gone to school there, obviously had to be enlightened: "These people own whole countries, hundreds of thousands of slaves," I explained. "They're bloodless murderers keeping the world hypnotized and into death. Man, do you know what these conglomerates are about? Where'd they come from all of a sudden like that, just gobbling everything up in big bites? That's why we're in Vietnam." I was the only one of us who was politically savvy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Terry Hawke and Betsy, clasping their blond hippie baby, ran up to us, picking up on the panic vibes, the acid tom-tom along the Mohawk. Everyone got the message: "We got to get out of here. Now!" Like maddened lemmings we all scrambled for the cars. Only Belasco mumbled thanks to the famous scientist for his hospitality. Dr. Sutter seemed thoroughly befuddled by the sudden exit. His PR man, still hanging from the diving board, yelled out an assurance that everything was all right, that Sutter was somehow managing to span the generation gap. . . .

IT WAS hard to know just how much of it was due to the acid we'd all taken so many times, Owsley's White Lightning or Purple Haze or the like. It would take years for us to realize that LSD was a condensed, easily-swallowed version of Revelations, that we were all golems, that Marvin Garson got it right when he called it "the staged 60's."

Late that night, I tried to do some sketches of the scene at Dr. Sutter's, but soon dozed at my desk, exhausted from the long and frightening acid trip. Spielman called me just after midnight.

"My mother's dead. My old man just called. I got a flight for New York at seven in the morning. Wham! She was forty-eight years old, Barry. Out of nowhere. You want to hear something far out? I was doing Sutter's daughter at the same time my mom was dying of a stroke. I mean the same time. I figured it out." I thought it was because he was in shock, and asked him what he meant.

"My mother was one of the telephone operators in the Sutter Industries building in Manhattan. Connecting plugs. Like, she was one of his hundred thousand peons. And I'm living it up in California drinking the bossman's champagne and doing his daughter—I *knew* she wasn't just jail bait, man, it's some kind of twisted karma. Pick me up at six in the morning, okay? I don't want to leave my car at the airport; don't know how long I'll be gone."

Spielman had recently moved from a rundown Victorian off the Panhandle to a storefront near seedy Playland at the beach in the Sunset. He had converted the store into a studio and living quarters, covering the display windows with bedspreads from India Imports.

The fog in the early morning was thick and wet, and the stucco little houses looked drab and uninviting compared to the sunny Haight or North Beach, where I lived. His door shed a shower of old paint as I hammered on it to wake him up. Bill looked pale and sickly. He washed his face and groped for a towel. "Did I tell you that Sutter's daughter and my mother had the same first name? Maureen. It really blows me out."

I was Mr. Rational now, a day after the scene at Sutter's. I told him that he could keep going with that train of thought, make all kinds of connections that weren't there—but I really believed otherwise. He got angry at my patronizing tone. "Hey, man, don't talk. You got the most conspiracy-filled brain I ever saw, man. I'm not saying there's anything *cosmic* or nothing. I'm not freaked out about Sutter like you are. I just thought it was weird, maybe a little karmic. How she was getting eighty bucks a week being one of his servants while I'm scarfing the boss's bacon and plucking his daughter's cherry and a bolt out of the blue and my mother's dead. That's far out, but that's all. But you rip your skin off about everything. Maybe your paranoia's justified, man—you know, paranoia is *true* perception—but you got other problems that got nothing to do with the way things are."

I said that Sutter's gallery was a front, that he and other technocrats were killing millions of people in Southeast Asia, as I had learned during my years of study. Bill lit into me again. He asked me if I was planning to kill Sutter: "Listen, man, you know better than me who's into that kind of bullshit—Communist martyrs and Berkeley assholes, guys who dig their pieces. So let's say you off a genius like Dr. Sutter. Then who would you kill? Don't you know it's endless—*that's* what it's all about! Who next? You're always talking about 'fascists.' It's this Jewish thing with you, man. A persecution complex."

As we drove to the airport, he told me that I had to get back from "it" or it would bury me. I had to straighten out my own life, loosen up. I said I'd try. When we got to the terminal, I told him how sorry I was about his mother. He shook his head: "Yah. She was a groovy woman, an Irish beauty. My old man was the only Jew in her neighborhood when they met. She was the best-looking woman in Hell's Kitchen. They got married and moved to Queens."

He thanked me for the lift, and we shook hands. "Don't you worry if you see some people with these funny little alien marks on their ankles," he deadpanned. "It ain't nothing."

TWO weeks later, a few hours after Turtle and I picked Bill up at the airport, we sat in the back room of Turtle's Haight Street store, trying to keep down a brew of peyote tea. Spielman read aloud from the front page of the *Chronicle*: the Syndicate was gaining control of the LSD market. The murders of a well-known dealer, Superspade, and of another pusher were attributed to the Mafia. Hell's Angels were involved. One of their twenty-year-old members was being held for the mutilation murder of another dealer. He had his victim's arm in his possession when arrested. "I'm very hazy about that arm," he told his lawyer.

"Don't bring me down," Turtle pleaded.

Spielman was in a mocking mood. "Don't be so sensitive, man. Just talk to Barry about the world situation. That'll bring you up."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I lashed back at Spiderman, saying that he buried his head in the sand, that everything was obviously leading to the Day of Judgment, the Apocalypse. Vietnam was just the tip of the iceberg. Bill would never read about the Vietnam deaths, just about Superspade. I predicted that there would be a second American civil war in a year, and that guys like Sutter would liquidate thousands of black troublemakers and their long-haired allies.

Turtle agreed with me that Dr. Sutter was probably a sinister space creature. "I think we made a big mistake with this exhibit," he said thoughtfully. "We ought to do something about it. Warn the world."

Spielman, as cynical as he was, appeared to agree. He declared that the media were the enemy, that people couldn't get back far enough to see what was happening, or to care. He too thought that it was all coming down soon. High on peyote holy water, he started talking about his mother's death, the two Maureens. Sutter *was* a monster.

Bill knew the news director at KNBC—he'd shot some film for him a few years earlier. We would all go to him, Bill suggested. He thought we could push the message through, that we'd be able to tell the world about its fate and the Sutter conspiracy.

At the station on Van Ness, Bill called the news director from the lobby, and the receptionist let up the three hirsute hippies against her better judgment. The balding, paunchy newsman greeted our lean and intense trio nervously, eying the clacking holyman's stick that I carried to "keep it away."

Spiderman sat on the desk opposite the journalist. "You're not reporting the *news*, man. That's your job and you're just ignoring it, making it all into crap for tourists, a circus. But one day, you're going to have to face it, man. No place to run to, no place to hide."

"You better get your act together, Mister," Turtle said softly and darkly, "because it's all going to come down."

I shook my stick, clack clack. "I used to be a pacifist," I explained, "and my friends here still are. But that's changing too. Now I'm not sure, but I think we may have to take life, if that's what has to happen, when it all starts to crash around us. I was always afraid to admit that. Not anymore. I'll have no mercy on those who only want to get hold of my body to torture and kill. I'm going to destroy Sutter Industries, for example. But I wouldn't shoot a fleeing man, not even a policeman, I reckon."

After a moment of silence, the news director fumbled in his desk until he came up with a pint bottle of bourbon, which we spurned contemptuously. "It's all been very interesting and I'll keep it in mind," he said nervously. "But you'll have to excuse me. I'm late for a party."

In the winter of '68, Spielman, Turtle, and I fled the psychedelic battlefield for England. The two of them settled in London, while I brooded on a remote farm that was near Llandstndwy in North Wales. Bill cut off the bushy natural that had haloed his face and shed forever his pea jacket with its cosmic patches. Now he wore elegantly tailored white suits and handmade green snakeskin boots. He and Turtle visited me on the farm for a weekend and he advised me to float in the pea soup of laid-back England. "Nobody's tracking you, man." I took his advice, and sat every day for months by the picturesque river that ran through the farm. I read Nietzsche and gradually recovered. Bill, meanwhile, hustled for work in London, building a set for a thirty-second scene in a Robert Sinzheim movie and getting a thousand pounds for pin-striping guitarist Blair Fulham's Rolls-Royce.

After a couple of years, Spielman, smoother and more sophisticated, moved to LA to set up shop. I ended up in Israel, and didn't see him for almost a decade. In 1978, we got together a few times when I brought my family to San Francisco for a long stay: the last time was when he and Wanda came up for a "hip reunion" a week before my return to Israel. I didn't go with them. "I got too many things to take care of—the 60's got no pull on me anyway," I told him, though I wasn't at all certain of that. But I was sure I didn't want to go. The reunion, fittingly, was being held in a giant theater—the William Randolph Hearst Greek amphitheater, featuring "The Sixties." I told Bill that perhaps I'd go to the one in 1988.

Spielman said he had "just one question about Israel, you going back to Israel. See, I think you're crazy, just as crazy as you ever were—what are you putting your kids' lives on the line for? What do you want to do that for?"

I said that Israel was safer and saner than California, that at least there was a "there there." It sometimes was a nasty place and I often despaired, but it wasn't empty and cold. It was *there*.

Bill laughed and tried to tell me what I would be missing—he was about to make a breakthrough on a movie-package deal with Warners. And even if it fell through, his financial future, at least, was looking rosy. He was getting big jobs from Ray Billings, the former PR man for Dr. Sutter. "I ain't going to apologize, Barry. My hair's gray. I got to put something away for my old age."

I agreed that no apologies were necessary, adding that I had long ago cured myself of certain obsessions, and Sutter Industries no longer haunted me. Politics, life had changed. Bob Dylan had changed. In the 60's, everything was unified. After it smashed into a thousand pieces, there were all these different types of people waving their own flags. I picked the flag of my people, as much as I may have once opposed nationalism and all that it stood for. Dylan, my hero back

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then, had become a Christian, to my chagrin, but he was still wise enough to know why everybody was now out for their own people and their own selves. They should be, because they look around and see that everything's unbalanced.

I reminded Spielman of that party at the now legendary Ruby's house, just before she OD'd. Spielman, loose and easy and magnetic, was boogeying with Roberta Rolan, wife of a big-time dope dealer. They were stoned on LSD and heroin and champagne. Whoops and clapping erupted as everyone got it on to Junior Walker and Wilson Pickett. Speedfreak Mary, a magician's ex-old lady, drifted by me looking like a Haight Street derelict. She had been so nice looking. Now she was emaciated and pimply and rotten, paranoid eyes encircled by black rings. She walked into Ruby's bedroom, where a gaggle of girls just like her jabbered away excitedly. Ruby held a hypodermic needle up to the light and pushed down the plunger until beige liquid squirted out.

Sometimes I'd felt intimidated by Ruby because of her fame, but I liked her and she was warm to me. I joined her and Speedfreak Mary and Jill, Ruby's best friend, a stripper on Broadway who had taught Ruby how to be hip. I told myself that I was only proving how strong I was, that I would never become addicted, and, in fact, I never did become a junkie. Heroin was basically dumb. You can get back so far you don't want to go back any more. But Ruby, and Jill, were fatally in love with it.

An hour later, Jill motioned me into an inner room of Ruby's Marin County estate, where the smell of patchouli oil was pervasive. One of her bracelets caught my eye as she beckoned—exquisite dark turquoise stones set in Mexican silver. The room she and her lover shared in the vast redwood house was located next to the huge, cedar-wood recording studio that Ruby's record company had recently built for her. Jill's room was dripping with Victoriana, Art Nouveau and Art Deco funk, old Tiffany lamps and signs from 1920's ice-cream parlors, heavy velvet curtains and a tulle bed canopy and an Early American rocking chair. She took something from an antique wooden box and held it in her cupped hands, exclaiming on its beauty. I expected a ruby, a pearl, or a gold scarab. I was astounded to see what she regarded as her prize possession—a bronze Nazi medal emblazoned with a storm-trooper helmet and a diamond-studded swastika set in the center.

Jill was confused by my reaction. When I mentioned that a third of the Jewish people had been wiped out by the Nazis, she said, in all innocence, "But can't you get back from all that and look at this as a fine piece of design, a work of art? It's an *Indian* symbol you know, Hitler just ripped it off."

What could I tell her? She OD'd six months after that last encounter, soon after twenty-five-year-old Ruby's drug death. And what could I tell Bill Spielman nearly a generation later when he scolded me for living in the eye of the storm, under a snow-laden roof that threatened to collapse?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ortega y Gasset Revisited

Richard John Neuhaus

Nobody claims that Spain has been at the center of 20th-century thought. In truth, even the more literate among us, pressed to name a major Spanish influence, would likely come up with no more than Unamuno (Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, 1864-1936) and perhaps "that other Spanish philosopher," Ortega (José Ortega y Gasset, 1883-1955). Some might reverse the order, but it is not a very long list. Now, however, there is occasion to take a fresh look at Ortega in particular. A new translation of his *The Revolt of the Masses** is of special interest in view of Spain's still-recent turn toward modernity and democracy.

Modernity and democracy are, at best, ambiguous projects in the thinking of Ortega. In his maturity, Ortega had moved well beyond his early Jesuit training in Madrid and the neo-Kantianism he had imbibed at Marburg. He developed a form of existentialism which insisted that basic reality is the decision of individual life here and now ("I am I, and my circumstances"). Against absolute or abstract reason, he posited reason as a function of life. This he called "vital reason" or "historical reason."

Although his books received critical acclaim, Ortega did not really write books. In keeping with his philosophy, he produced numerous occasional pieces in response to specific circumstances, and these were later gathered between covers. The resulting lack of systematic consistency, compensated in part by a sense of immediacy, is no accident. Despite his suspicion of universals, Ortega did not hesitate to leap from immediate occasion to grand generalization. From observing a Spaniard giving directions to a foreign tourist, or from reading a newspaper account of a divorce proceeding, Ortega proceeds to draw lessons about the crisis of the age. The result is a frequently startling, if not always convincing, insight on a world that, then and now, overlooks some of the most obvious things about itself.

Of the books in English a number still make for rewarding reading, including *Meditations on Quixote* and *Toward a Philosophy of History*. But for those who connect Ortega's name with only one book, the one book is likely to be his 1929 collection, *The Revolt of the Masses*.

The Revolt of the Masses is beyond doubt a classic. In his lively new translation of the work, Anthony Kerrigan takes Ortega at his word when he writes: "There is but one way to salvage a classic: to give up reverence and to use it for our own un-salvaged salvation, to lay aside its status as a classic, to make it contemporary. Its pulse must rebound from an infusion of our own blood." But it is not easy to give up reverence for a book such as this. Kerrigan in his extensive introduction and notes, and Saul Bellow in his foreword, trace something of the impact that *The Revolt of the Masses* has had on the way we think about our century. In the literary genre of "what has gone wrong with modernity," the book has few peers.

What has gone wrong, according to Ortega, is everything that has produced "mass man." The solution, if there is a solution, lies in the leadership of "select men" in creating a new Europe that will dare to obey its destiny. Ortega is *very* European. Born to a literary family in Spain, he early attached his fortunes and affections to what he almost calls the Holy Trinity of France, England, and Germany. If Spain could not be a full person in the deity, it would at least have a place near the throne, whereas upstarts like the United States and Russia might be permitted a seat among the lower ranks of angels.

Ortega's extreme Eurocentric view of the universe is not the chief difficulty encountered by interpreters of *Revolt* who would "make it contemporary." There is, for instance, the problem that Ortega approves of much that, perhaps inevitably, produced mass man while at the same time he deplores the result. In particular, he approves of technology and liberal democracy; or at least of some technology, and at least of liberalism, if not of democracy. And, although one might make him contemporary, it is hard to make convincing an author who declares that "the real problem" is that "Europe has been left without a moral code," and then goes on to argue that the solution is for Europe to be more European.

Revolt, however, is a classic not because it convinces but because it convicts. Coherence of argument is subordinated to force of expression as, with brilliant aphorisms and flights of metaphor, Ortega leads the reader to confess that, yes, this is the way it is with us. Or, perhaps more typically, the reader is led to think that this is the way it is with *them*, the mass men whose barbarity has trampled and vulgarized all that we, along with Ortega, revere as excellent. "It is Ortega's view," writes Bellow, "that we in the West live under a dictatorship of the commonplace." The dictator

Richard John Neuhaus, *a Lutheran pastor, is director of the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society and the author of, most recently,* Dispensations: The Future of South Africa as South Africans See It *(Eerdmans).*

* Translated and with an introduction by Anthony Kerrigan, foreword by Saul Bellow, Notre Dame Press, 192 pp., $20.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is mass man, who is not to be confused with "the masses" of class conflict. Mass man is not the proletariat but the people of all classes, especially the ruling classes, who have forgotten that civilization consists in repeated decision and new creation. Mass man is the barbarian who, as Alasdair MacIntyre has argued in *After Virtue*, "has been ruling us for some time now."

In 1929, when *Revolt* was first published, Ortega described mass man in this way:

> If the psychological structure of this mass man is considered in regard to its social effect we find the following: (1) he is possessed of an inborn and deep-seated belief that life should be easy, plentiful, without tragic limitations; thus the average individual is animated by a sense of power and success which (2) leads him to affirm himself just as he is, and to consider himself complete in his moral and intellectual being. This self-satisfaction leads him to deny any exterior authority, to refuse to listen, to evade submitting his opinions to judgment, and to avoid considering the views of others. He is driven to make his weight felt. He will tend to act as if only he and his kind exist in the world; and thus (3) he will involve himself in everything, putting forth his mediocre view, without hesitancy, reserve, reflection, or negotiation.

Mass man is the "spoiled child" who takes for granted his right to "unhindered expansion of his vital desires" and is marked by "total ingratitude toward all that has made possible the ease of his existence."

In contrast to mass man is select man. Ortega the prosecutor does not describe select man in such detail; presumably, the vivid description of the vice will illuminate the contrasting virtue. Although Ortega does not put it quite this way, the select man is select by virtue of his selecting and being selected. That is, he both chooses and is chosen; he chooses to keep faith with his fate or destiny. The select man might thus better be called the elect man. He elects to embrace his election, and the form of his election is to be found in his circumstances ("I am I, and my circumstances").

In describing the circumstances of the select man, Ortega was fond of the imagery of shipwreck. "For the only authentic ideas," he writes, "are those of the castaway. The rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. Whoever does not really feel himself lost is lost without remission, that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes upon his own reality." The exemplar of the select man is the philosopher who is "divinely discontent," an "amputated being," always yearning for the truth that is missing. Unlike the mass man of the crowd, the select man knows with Kierkegaard that the crowd is untruth. Only as a castaway, in the full knowledge of his disaster, does he become the "aristocrat" who is able and obligated to take responsibility for who he will be.

Since the first appearance of *The Revolt of the Masses* more than fifty years ago, some writers on the Left have expressed admiration for it—in some instances, no doubt, because they read only the title and missed the point. But others have liked it because in mass man they see described the product of capitalist consumerist society, the victim of the majoritarian mentality of bourgeois democracy. The more conventional liberal opinion, however, is that Ortega is insufferably elitist. He believed that culture was always and radically insecure, that only an enlightened minority (select man) could reinvent and redefine the social order and then do what was necessary to enlist the obedience of the masses who invariably live without plan or effort. In an earlier work Ortega had written: "There is no political health when the government functions without the active cooperation of majorities. Perhaps this is why politics seems to me a second-class occupation." In truth, it was not only mass man but the masses—meaning ordinary people—whom Ortega found distasteful. Ortega wrote that he favored democracy; he might even have loved democracy, had it not involved so many people.

In his introduction Kerrigan tries to cleanse Ortega of the taint of elitism. "These select men are not seen to form an elite, as Ortega never tired of repeating in the years after the publication of this book. They are, most simply and naturally, a select *minority*. Ortega's critics, especially the dogmatically 'anti-elitist' elitist liberals, have nevertheless persisted in calling him an 'elitist.'" Ortega himself writes that "the select individual is not the petulant snob who thinks he is superior to others, but is, rather, the person who demands more from himself than do others." But to demand more of oneself is, as Ortega makes abundantly clear, precisely the mark of superiority. As for Kerrigan's attempted absolution, a translator's devotion to his author is laudable but cannot change the fact that the brilliance of Ortega's analysis is heavily tarnished by what is most accurately described as snobbery.

"The most important fact in the public life of the West in modern times, for good or ill," writes Ortega in his opening line, "is the appearance of the masses in the seats of highest social power." He then goes on at length to make clear that it is entirely for ill, as he rails against the vulgar crowds that have invaded the theaters, restaurants, and coaches that were once reserved for their betters. The problem, he claims, is an excess of population produced by the combination of technology and liberal democracy, and resulting in "the social animal as stray." Europe is in trouble because "civilization becomes ever more complex and difficult," and, while there are "very few clear heads" capable of finding solutions, "the plebeian body of Europe does not want this kind of head on its shoulders."

This sentiment is a commonplace in almost any contemporary faculty club or government bureau. When Ortega writes about people being unwilling to come to terms with their "circumstances," it is frequently evident that he means they should stay in their place. Of course excellence in any form is always in short supply, and those who cultivate it constitute an elite. But one need not be either a dogmatically anti-elitist elitist or a populist enthusiast to be repelled by Ortega's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contempt for forms of excellence other than his own. It is to be feared that over the years many people, both on the Left and on the Right, have relished *Revolt* for the unlovely reason that it has confirmed them in their feelings of superiority over the common run of humanity.

That is too bad, because there are really very good reasons for liking the book. In 1929 the world was shadowed by totalitarian threats, and few discerned the form of modern barbarism more clearly than Ortega. The fascists, he writes, "were characterized by the first appearance of a type of man who *did not care to give reasons or even to be right*, but who was simply resolved to impose his opinions. That was the novelty: the right not to be right, not to be reasonable: 'the reason of unreason'" (emphasis added). There was, he notes, an obsession with "direct action." In a civilized order, violence is the *ultima ratio*, but for the zealots of direct action it became the *prima ratio*, even the *unica ratio*, the prime and only form of reason.

Combined with violence was the adulation of "youth." Ortega might have been writing about the barbarism of the 60's in Europe and America when he describes the "grotesque" and "almost comical" spectacle of people calling themselves "young" because they have been told that youth has more rights than obligations. "Youth has always considered itself exempt from *doing* or already *having done* great deeds or feats. It has always lived on credit." The astounding thing to behold, he says, is that "nowadays these juniors take it as a definitive right precisely in order to lay claim to all the other rights which belong only to those who have already accomplished something. Though it may appear incredible, 'youth' has become a form of blackmail."

Another passage so perfectly describes strains of our late and unlamented counterculture that the reader may be surprised to learn that it all happened before:

> The fascist will let himself be mobilized against political liberty knowing full well that in the end it will survive in the West along with the substance and essence of Europe, to reappear when it is critically and vitally needed. For this is the mark and keynote of the mass man: his lack of seriousness and his taste for buffoonery and farce. The actions of mass man lack any sense of irrevocability: they are like the pranks and escapades of rich kids. Their penchant for adopting hard, pseudo-tragic attitudes is mere show. They play at tragedy because they think the real tragedy of the civilized world is not to be believed.

The Abbie Hoffmans and Andy Warhols had their precursors among the "super-realists" in "the epoch of 'currents,' of 'letting yourself go.'" It was also the epoch of "radicalized" writing. "The 'super-realist' feels he has gone beyond all literary history when he writes down some complicated excrescence where others wrote 'jasmines, swans, and fauns.' What he has really done is to dredge up another rhetoric which lay dormant in the latrines."

IN THE course of Ortega's sometimes irascible and sometimes whimsical polemic, the definition of mass man becomes impossibly confused. At one point he is the man religiously devoted to "being just like everybody else," only to appear later as the man iconoclastically determined to be "unlike anyone who has ever been before." Saul Bellow is not sure that Ortega's mass man of unwarranted self-confidence and depressing conformity is very much like "the average man" of today. And as for the other mass man, the man of iconoclastic posturing, in today's fragmented culture (which we prefer to call "pluralistic") there is surely reason for greater sympathy with him.

Ortega himself repeatedly insisted, "Man must choose, must elect continually." Today almost everyone faces what Peter Berger calls "the heretical imperative," the inescapability of electing one's social identity. If some people elect bizarre and degraded identities, it is perhaps because there has been a cultural collapse in which worthier alternatives have not been sustained. Ortega speaks of cultural collapse, but his preoccupation with mass man results in his misplacing the blame.

"What I affirm is that there is no culture where there are no norms and standards to which our fellow citizens can have recourse," Ortega writes. But then he goes on to blame the "vertical invasion" of mass man, which means mediocre people refusing to stay in their mediocre places and usurping the seats of the powerful. Or he speaks of the "invading jungle" of outsiders who do not know the rules of civilization. He might more justly put the blame on his elite of select men, of people like himself, who are, after all, to be the guardians of culture.

The Revolt of the Masses is the wrong name for the story Ortega tells. The book might better have been titled *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, had Julien Benda not beaten him to it by two years. In the course of his argument Ortega betrays some ambivalence about whether the critical problem is the invasion of mass man or the abdication of select man. Unfortunately, he plumps for the former, with the ironic consequence that those who fancy themselves select men are reinforced in their feeling of self-satisfied smugness. Yet that, of course, is precisely the feeling that according to Ortega is characteristic of mass man!

In this respect, and contrary to Ortega's intention, *Revolt* has no doubt done its share to turn real or potential select men into mass men, thereby contributing to the vulgarization that he deplores. Further compounding the problem, many mass men who enjoy *Revolt* altogether too much have likely been led to the utterly mistaken conclusion that they are in fact select men. The proof, in their view, is that they wholeheartedly agree with Ortega, who is beyond question a select man. Vigorously applauding the prosecution, the defendants fail to notice that they are in the dock. This is a perennial problem when prophetic indictment is so persuasive in form and so broad in scope.

THE solution, according to Ortega, is a recovery of nerve, a vital em-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brace of destiny. He describes his historical moment as one that feels it is "more than past times, and less than itself. Powerful, and uncertain of its destiny. Proud of its strength and fearful of its might." The historical moment is emphatically, and exclusively, a European moment. If there is uncertainty in the world, it is because "a rumor is circulating to the effect that the commandments of the law of Europe are about to be done away with." The consequence is that peoples attempt to live without imperatives, "for the only imperatives that existed were European."

Because human beings finally cannot live without imperatives, "soon a cry will go up from around the planet, rising like the howl of an innumerable pack of wild dogs baying at the stars, crying for someone or something to take command and impose a mission." Europe must respond to that cry, for it is the destiny of Europe to command, "to supply people with a mission, to give them their bearings, to allot them a destiny." It might be pointed out that soon Adolf Hitler would respond to that cry, but to this Ortega would counter that Nazi conquest was the antithesis of the building of the nation of Europe for which he called. Nazism, it might be argued, was the result of Europe's defaulting on what Ortega believed was its destiny.

The little nationalisms of Europe must give way to the nationalism of Europe. "It is impossible to imagine any more important task for the European today than to fulfill the promise inherent in the concept of 'European' during the past four centuries." This is "the enormous drama" to be played out in the coming years. Upon it depends not only the future of Europe but of the world, for we live in a world in which "one either commands or obeys." Ortega was an unabashed imperialist. Lesser breeds should not be dominated by compulsion but should be given the opportunity "to take part in an enterprise, in some great historic destiny." "Hence, there is no imperium without a program for life, without a program for imperial life." Such a program must be derived from imperatives and, again, all the imperatives are European. Only in facing up to this reality will Europe be able to do for the world what "the great Caesar" did for the Roman empire.

THE question is not whether there will be ruler and ruled, but only who will rule and who will be ruled. The next-to-last chapter of *Revolt* is titled "Who Rules the World?" and begins with the assumption that whoever rules in the world "does, in effect, exert an authoritative influence over the whole of it." Ruling comes naturally to those who rule, and their right to rule is popularly recognized. "Rule is the normal exercise of authority, and it is always based on public opinion, the same today as it was ten thousand years ago, whether among the civilized English or the Bushmen." One cannot rule by coercion alone, or by coercion primarily. Ortega approvingly quotes Talleyrand's remark to Napoleon: "You can do everything with bayonets, Sire, except sit on them." From this Ortega concludes: "In sum, to rule is to sit down, be it on a throne, curule chair, front bench, ministerial seat, or bishop's cathedra. Contrary to the naive melodramatic view, ruling is not so much a question of a heavy hand as a firm seat." Ruling rests upon "the preponderance of an opinion, and therefore of a spirit," which means that "ruling is, in the end, a matter of spiritual power."

The problem, already evident in the late 20's, is that the spiritual power of Europe, and therefore its right to rule the world, was no longer recognized by the rest of the world. Oswald Spengler and others wrote about the exhaustion of Europe and the decline of the West, but Ortega would have none of that. The fault lay rather with the "mass men" of the rest of the world who refused to acknowledge the natural superiority of Europe, and with the "mass men" of Europe who refused to let Europe be Europe. For Ortega, Europe's spiritual power and consequent right to rule were self-evident. The implication is that those who do not recognize the self-evident should at least accept these truths by faith. If there are others who need argument and persuasion, so much the worse for them. Ortega, for one, will not accommodate them. "I am I, and my circumstances." Europe is Europe, and its destiny is to rule the world.

ORTEGA knew little about the United States, and apparently would have been content to know a good deal less. He expresses his irritation with "the mass of puerile judgments made on the United States in Europe" by "even the most cultured people." For instance, it is said that America is the force of the future by virtue of its technology. First, responds Ortega, technology is a European achievement imported by America. Second and more important, people cannot live off technology, which "is a useful, practical precipitate of superfluous, impractical concerns." America is the epitome of what Ortega most despises, namely, rebellion. Rebellion "consists in not accepting one's own destiny, in rebelling against oneself." Although Ortega does not say so, one might fairly infer that America rebelled against itself by refusing to be ruled by Europe.

The Revolt of the Masses has over the years been acclaimed as "prophetic" and remarkable in its predictive power. In connection with who rules the world, one naturally looks for what Ortega has to say about Russia. The answer is, not much. The Bolshevik Revolution is a dreary cliché in which "not a single error or defect of previous revolutions has been corrected in the slightest." Therefore, "what has happened in Russia is of no historical interest." In any event, revolution or not, the Russians are "living in an age different from ours." The Russians, like the Americans, are a child-people wearing a historical camouflage. In the case of the Americans the camouflage is technology, in the case of the Russians it is Marxism. "Russia is Marxist in approximately the same measure the Germans in the Holy Roman Empire were Romans."

This view of the relationship between Russia and Marxism still has adherents today. Solzhenitsyn and many others would not disagree with Ortega's claim that "Russia's strength lies in what is Russian and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not in what is Communist." Unlike Ortega, however, they know that, no matter how ill the match between Russia and Marxism, Marxist Russia has become a force contending for world rule, whereas Ortega believed that Russia "would need centuries" to become such a force, and then it would be such a force because it is Russia and not because it is Communist. Although he had no truck with Communism, Ortega disagreed with those who hoped for the collapse of Bolshevism. "The failure of the Russians would represent a universal failure for one and all, of man as such. Communism is a piece of 'moral' extravagance, but it is nonetheless a species of morality." Rather than hoping for a collapse of "the Slavic morality," it would be worthier to offer "a new morality for the West, a new program for life on earth."

But Europe, it would seem, has little to offer since, as Ortega says, "the real problem" is that "Europe has been left without a moral code." The problem would seem to be insoluble. It forces Ortega back upon his existentialist premise and we come full circle with the proposal that Europe must be Europe. To rule the world is Europe's "circumstance." It is necessary, and necessity is its own justification. "There is truth in existence only when we feel that our acts are irrevocably necessary." In his efforts to impose unity, Caesar felt that "subtle, almost mystical" necessity. And so it will be with the formation of the state of Ortega's European nation. "It is pure dynamism—the will to do something in common—and thanks to this feature, the state has no physical limits." The tragic irony is that in the 1930's others would embrace this vision of "pure dynamism."

One must ask whether Ortega did not contribute to mass man's insistence upon his right not to give reasons, his embrace of the reason of unreason, the reason of necessity that is its own reason. At an earlier point Ortega affirms that there is no culture where there are no norms and standards by which disputes can be adjudicated. "There is no culture where aesthetic controversy does not recognize the necessity for justifying the work of art." In the absence of such norms and standards, "there is, in the strictest sense of the word, barbarism." But surely, if a work of art must be justified, ruling the world must be justified, or else the rulers are barbarians, even if they are Europeans. Yet Europe, according to Ortega, has no moral code, no norms and standards; and the rest of the world has none, either, since all the "imperatives" are European. And thus he falls back upon the necessity of circumstance and pure dynamism which, in a world no longer ruled by Europe, turned out to be a necessity misperceived and a dynamism exhausted.

The Revolt of the Masses remains a classic for many reasons, not least for its classic wrongheadedness. In blaming the masses for what had gone wrong with the world, Ortega was indulging in what has come to be called "blaming the victim." Treasonous intellectuals complain that those whom they have trained and certified as intellectuals turn out to be traitors to the culture. With respect to who rules the world, the argument might be made that Ortega's mistake was merely in failing to recognize the way in which America would assume the exercise of the European imperatives. Although challenged ideologically and militarily by a Soviet Union perilously seated upon its bayonets, America does today rule in the world in the sense of "exerting an authoritative influence over the whole of it." But this "circumstance" can hardly be explained as a continuation of Ortega's understanding of the European hegemony.

Yet to the limited extent that America does have a "firm seat" today, it is for reasons quite different from those which Ortega associated with rule. America's is a rule that does not claim a right to rule based in circumstance and necessity, but seeks to justify itself in reason and morality. Moreover, and in sharp contrast to Ortega's anti-idealism, it seeks justification in an idea, the idea of democracy. From the founding period through Woodrow Wilson and Ronald Reagan's "democratic revolution," it appeals for vindication precisely to those whom Ortega tended to disdain. And, at least formally, it appeals for more final vindication to a higher source from which it believes it has received a moral code.

Ortega claimed that the "spiritual power" of ruling was in the respect that inferiors showed to their natural superiors. The democratic proposition is that such spiritual power is in the respect that rulers show for the ruled, including a readiness to fudge the distinction between ruler and ruled. Of course other, and not always edifying, factors go into ruling the world, factors such as geography, historical accident, and economic and military muscle. In view of how things have turned out so far, however, Ortega's theory and expectations brilliantly depicted the modern world upside down. On the other hand, for Ortega theories were a kind of game in the interplay of reason and historical dynamics and were therefore always revocable. A half-century later the argument of *Revolt* has been revoked by history, but it remains a scintillating exercise in what might have been and —who knows?—what might have been better.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Defending the West

STAR WARS: SUICIDE OR SURVIVAL? By ALUN CHALFONT. *Little, Brown. 169 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN PETER ROSEN

THIS brief, undogmatic book by the chairman of the House of Lords' All-Party Defense Group may not make many ripples in the ever-growing community of American defense intellectuals since it does not uncover military incompetence, develop war-winning strategies, or warn of impending disaster. Instead, it gives a comprehensible description of the political and military conditions currently facing the West, and then goes on to show how, for Western Europe, genuine political independence can either be gradually eroded, ensured by a number of unacceptable methods, or literally defended by military means that include less than perfect anti-missile systems. In the long run, arguments like Lord Chalfont's for modestly effective anti-missile defenses may prove to be one of the more important legacies of Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

Chalfont clearly recognizes that the key objective of U.S. strategic forces is not the deterrence of a massive Soviet nuclear attack on American cities. The problem is and always has been how U.S. strategic forces can deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe (and also help prevent Soviet coercion of Western Europe in peacetime). In assessing our ability to do so, Chalfont tacitly observes what Albert Wohlstetter has called the "dual criteria." These criteria state that a deterrent threat is effective only if the execution of that threat will yield an outcome which is simultaneously unacceptable to your enemy and acceptable to you. If the outcome is unacceptable to you as well, no calculating enemy will expect you to execute it, and you will be in the psychologically debilitating position of advocating policies which you know you would not carry out.

Too often, the proponents of nuclear strategies forget the necessity of satisfying the second of the two criteria. Chalfont does not. The policy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), he writes, is a pledge to commit suicide which may have helped to keep the peace but which will produce totally unacceptable results if deterrence fails. Nor is it MAD alone that does not satisfy the dual criteria. As Chalfont notes, the policy that required the United States to launch a massive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union in response to a Soviet attack on Europe died as a practical matter sometime in the 1960's, if not earlier. Henry Kissinger's public acknowledgment of this death in 1979 should have removed any remaining belief in the efficacy of the policy.

Chalfont also casts justified doubt on the idea that the U.S. would conduct limited nuclear strikes against the territory of the Soviet Union in response to a Soviet conventional attack on Europe. Exercising either of these options would be unacceptable to the Soviet Union, but even more unacceptable to the West.

There clearly are, however, defense policies that would satisfy the dual criteria. As Chalfont shows, effective non-nuclear defenses for NATO, which would deny the Soviets military success in wartime and political advantages in peacetime, are easy to design, if hard to pay for. Although the counter-argument is sometimes made that a conventional war to defend Western Europe would be at least as bad as World War II, and hence that non-nuclear defenses would be even worse than the current policy of relying on mutual nuclear suicide to deter war, the reader can resolve the matter for himself by asking the nearest available survivor of World War II whether he would have preferred committing suicide to fighting and surviving the war.

Chalfont declines to judge the technical effectiveness of particular anti-missile systems, but he does remark on the unseemly rush by some American scientific groups to discredit any possible system. He does what is reasonable, which is to lay out the strategic criteria by which a defensive technology should be judged.

So long as the Soviets have nuclear-armed missiles, NATO will have the choice of doing nothing, building more offensive nuclear missiles for itself, or building anti-missile defenses. If the Soviets have a military plan for a war with NATO, and if that plan involves the use of ballistic missiles against NATO military targets, anti-missile systems that make it difficult to execute that attack would help deter it.

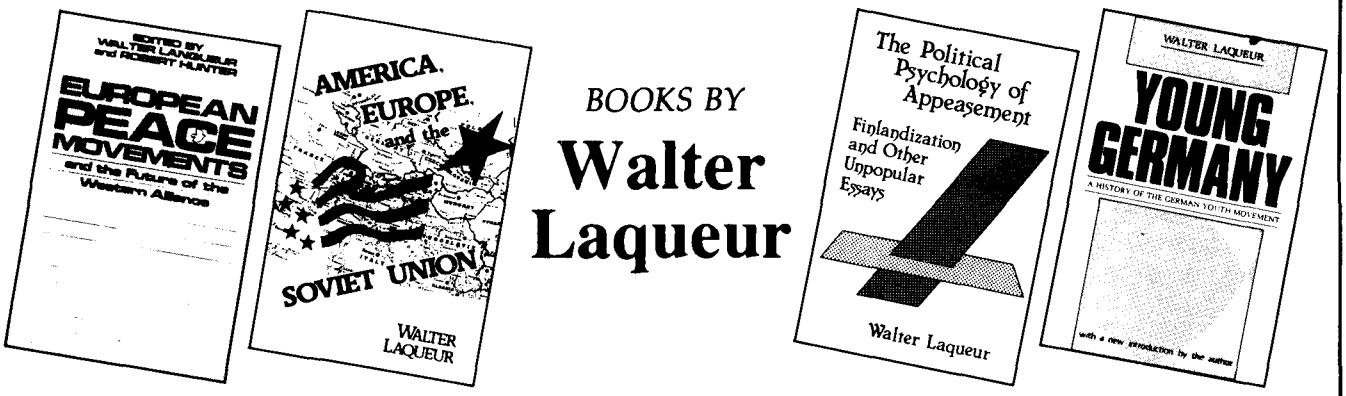
Chalfont is clear that the world would be better off if the military balance between East and West were maintained with fewer offensive nuclear weapons, even if those weapons were not rendered totally obsolete. But he also is clear that anti-missile defenses could help make this possible, *and* could be politically more palatable to Europeans than the alternative of more offensive nuclear weapons stationed in Europe.

Arguments like this, advanced by Europeans and addressed to Europeans, are extremely important, since technological and political conditions may make possible the deployment of anti-missile systems for the defense of NATO bases in Europe well before the deployment of such defenses for the national territory of the United States. From the technical standpoint, defending against the shorter-range Soviet ballistic missiles aimed at Europe is easier than defending against intercontinental ballistic missiles aimed at the United States. For one thing, the shorter-range missiles move at speeds closer to those of airplanes than of ICBM's. For another, they are fired from posi-

STEPHEN PETER ROSEN *is a Secretary of the Navy Fellow at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM TRANSACTION BOOKS


EDITED BY WALTER LAQUEUR and ROBERT HUNTER
EUROPEAN PEACE MOVEMENTS and the Future of the Western Alliance
AMERICA, EUROPE, and the SOVIET UNION
WALTER LAQUEUR
The Political Psychology of Appeasement
Finlandization and Other Unpopular Essays
Walter Laqueur
WALTER LAQUEUR
YOUNG GERMANY
A HISTORY OF THE GERMAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

BOOKS BY

Walter Laqueur

EUROPEAN PEACE MOVEMENTS AND THE FUTURE OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

Walter Laqueur and Robert Hunter, editors

This extraordinary compendium concerns the future of the Western alliance and the development of the peace movements in Europe and in the United States. The peace movement is an old phenomenon given new life by NATO decisions concerning nuclear deployment in Europe and the Soviet responses along the same lines. After a long postwar marriage, Europeans and Americans alike are reexamining the premises of the Western alliance.

The work contains an extraordinary array of talent from both the American and European perspectives. Among the major contributors and their themes are Henry Kissinger on "A Plan to Reshape NATO"; William G. Hyland on "The European Peace Movement and NATO"; Irving Kristol on "What's Wrong with NATO?"; Theodore Draper on "The Western Misalliance"; Niels Haagerup on "The Nordic Peace Movements"; Martin Ceadel on "The British Nuclear Disarmers"; and Jeffrey Herf on "The SPD and the Peace Movement in West Germany." This is a well-integrated text, with no random essays.

ISBN: 0-88738-035-2 (cloth) **$39.95**
1985 **385 pp.**

AMERICA, EUROPE, AND THE SOVIET UNION

Walter Laqueur

Bringing together for the first time his many penetrating essays on U.S. foreign policy, Europe, and the Soviet Union, written during the Carter and the Reagan administrations, Laqueur in this book focuses on the absence of a U.S. global strategy.

Laqueur shows that this lack of strategy, a hallmark of both Republican and Democratic administrations, has its counterpart in the general drift that characterizes Western European politics. For both the United States and Europe, there has been a weakening of political will.

Exposing the myth that the United States is in an enviable position in the world, Laqueur reveals how the media and the academic community have been unwilling to accept the fact of diminished U.S. stature in the Western world.

ISBN: 0-87855-362-2 (cloth) **$22.95**
1983 **200 pp.**

Walter Laqueur is editor-in-chief of *The Washington Quarterly*, one of the most influential foreign policy journals in the nation. He is chairman of the International Research Council of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University, and codirector of the Wiener Library and Institute of European History in London.

YOUNG GERMANY

A HISTORY OF THE GERMAN YOUTH MOVEMENT
New introduction by the author

Walter Laqueur

Young Germany explores the revolt of the younger generation in Germany from 1896 to 1933. It is a readable history of the Free Youth Movement, one of the most significant factors in shaping modern Germany. Laqueur, who grew up in Germany, retraces the history of the movement, its central ideas, and its cultural background.

ISBN: 0-88738-002-6 (cloth) **$24.95**
ISBN: 0-87855-960-4 (paper) **$12.95**
1984 **260 pp.**

THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF APPEASEMENT

FINLANDIZATION AND OTHER UNPOPULAR ESSAYS

Walter Laqueur

This volume takes its title from one of the most controversial and prescient essays of our times: an analysis of Eurocommunism, not simply as a Western European heresy but as a consequence of military stalemate and the atrophy of will in the West.

Laqueur's papers cover the areas with which he has become strongly identified in recent years: American foreign policy, European affairs, political futures, terrorism, the Middle East conflict, and finally, Judaica.

ISBN: 0-87855-336-3 (cloth) **$19.95**
1980 **283 pp.**

Order from your bookstore or prepaid from:

Transaction Books
Rutgers—The State University
Department WL8
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions close to their targets, so the high-powered radars and expensive satellite systems needed to track missiles launched from the other side of the globe are not necessary. Then, too, systems to defend against shorter-range ballistic missiles can emerge from, and be supplemented by, existing NATO air-defense systems, so that they would not be circumvented by aircraft and cruise missiles.

To be sure, if NATO's goal is to defend its *cities* against ballistic missiles, a defensive system that kills half of the warheads it shoots at is not very interesting. But if, as Chalfont suggests, the goal is to ensure the survival of a portion of the NATO air bases and other military targets against attack, that same system begins to look very interesting indeed.

Finally, systems to defend against ballistic missiles with less than intercontinental range are not covered by the U.S.-Soviet ABM treaty. Building such systems could thus not only help defeat Soviet war plans but may be easier to do than for the United States to proceed with SDI.

POLITICAL as well as technological progress toward a nationwide system to defend the United States against ICBM attack is likely to come very slowly over the next ten years. SDI is now a research effort that is little more than the aggregation of programs that already existed before the President's March 1983 speech. There is little effective support anywhere within the American government for moving beyond research to the development and deployment of a defensive system. The costs of doing so are seen as high: violating the ABM treaty and, in a Gramm-Rudman world of shrinking defense budgets, taking away a lot of money from other American military projects. Why should an American President decide to go ahead with the deployment of a defense designed to handle an all-out, bolt-out-of-the-blue nuclear attack by the Soviet Union on the United States when that seems the unlikeliest of all possibilities?

What is taken much more seriously by people who think about Soviet war plans is a very limited nuclear attack on targets outside of the United States for military gain after a major conflict has already broken out. But such an attack would not kill American civilians, and supporters of President Reagan and SDI in the United States are already asking why the U.S. should pay for anti-missile defenses for Europe. That is where Chalfont's argument comes in.

WHEN Ronald Reagan retires, SDI, under a Republican or Democratic President, may well be allowed to recede for a time into low-visibility projects funded at modest levels. The situation could change either if the Soviet Union unilaterally decided to break out of the ABM treaty and the limits placed on its offensive forces or if it attacked a country the United States has promised to defend. If neither of these things happens, anti-missile systems built by Europeans for the defense of Europe—one would hope with American assistance—may be the most important form of defense it is politically possible for the West to deploy.

Chalfont's book helps to create the consensus for such a deployment by asking Europeans if they prefer the plausible alternatives: reduced independence of the Soviet Union and/or more offensive nuclear weapons. For that reason it deserves to be at the center of the current strategic debate.

"The Family"

THE BIG DANCE. By JOHN CASTELLUCCI. *Dodd, Mead. 358 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by HARVEY KLEHR

TWO policemen and one guard were murdered during the bungled holdup of an armored Brinks truck near Nyack, New York on October 20, 1981. After a short chase two men and two women were arrested; a number of others escaped. The brutal crime quickly gained a new dimension when one of those in custody was identified as Kathy Boudin, a member of the Weatherman terrorist group and a fugitive ever since the explosion of a Greenwich Village townhouse being used for a bomb factory in 1970 had killed three of her comrades.

Two other white radicals, David Gilbert and Judith Clark, were captured at the scene, as was one black radical, Sam Brown. Three days later one black suspect was arrested and another killed in a shootout with police. Six more suspects were arrested in 1982, four in 1984. The last fugitive, Mutulu Shakur, alleged ringleader of the group, was captured only a few months ago.

As police investigated the Brinks case they also exposed a bizarre alliance between the remnants of the Weatherman group and a handful of black revolutionaries whose previous specialty had been assassinating police officers. Between 1977 and 1981 members of this terrorist "Family" had attempted some twenty robberies and netted more than $1 million; the haul from the ill-fated Nyack robbery would have been $1.6 million.

The federal government prosecuted several members of the Family under an anti-racketeering statute, and New York State pressed murder and armed-robbery charges. Virtually all the defendants have been found guilty of some crime, and most have received lengthy prison sentences. Kathy Boudin, the most notorious defendant, pleaded guilty to murder and robbery and was sentenced to twenty years to life in prison.

BECAUSE of the complexity of the case, the numerous trials, and the piecemeal manner in which it was unraveled, there has been a need for a comprehensive account of this rare example of an interracial, radical, criminal conspiracy. The first effort to tell the entire story, Ellen Frankfort's *Kathy Boudin and the Dance of Death*, was an embarrassing failure. Short on details and long on reflections on feminism, it also suffered from the

---

HARVEY KLEHR *is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Politics at Emory University and the author of* The Heyday of American Communism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact that it was written before Miss Boudin entered her guilty plea.

John Castellucci, a reporter who covered the Brinks case for a Rockland County newspaper, has now written a fascinating if somewhat journalistic account of the history of the Family, the Brinks holdup, and the ensuing trials. Packed with revealing information, *The Big Dance* (the code name used for the Nyack robbery) not only has a story to tell, it also attempts to explain how and why the "idealism" of the 1960's dissolved into fanaticism.

While Castellucci in no way minimizes or condones the crimes that were committed, he emphasizes the psychological factors which in his belief account for the transformation of upper-middle-class students into terrorists. Kathy Boudin, for example, first went to work in a Cleveland slum on an SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) project because she felt guilty about her own advantages. Later on, she felt "morally inferior to black political activists accused of crime." Even after her arrest, Castellucci argues, she felt guilty about the high-powered legal talent her father, the noted radical lawyer Leonard Boudin, was able to employ in her behalf. The other white radicals rejected any traditional legal defense because it would demonstrate "white skin privilege." David Gilbert also felt guilty that his lapse of concentration had contributed to the Nyack debacle.

There is no doubt that the peculiar behavior of the Weatherman group requires at least in part to be understood in terms of psychopathology. In its early days, within its own circle, the group had instituted "smash-monogamy" campaigns to overcome selfish feelings of attachment to other people. It had also encouraged homosexual activities as part of an effort to build a cohesive band of revolutionaries (Kathy Boudin had experimented with lesbianism). Gilbert had opposed Boudin's practice of breast-feeding their infant; he thought it a sexist practice that deprived the father of his right to nurture.

ALTHOUGH Castellucci can be helpful on psychological matters, he is not so reliable a guide to the political background and alliances of the radical Left. For example, he calls Angela Davis a black nationalist (she is a Communist) and Noam Chomsky a "liberal political writer and linguist" (he is a radical). Moreover, psychology tends to explain much too much in this book. To argue that the politics of white members of the Family "was solely an attempt to achieve personal purity by overcoming the mortification they experienced when they contrasted their privileges as white people to the deprivations suffered by blacks" is to understand very little indeed of the history and ideology of the New Left.

They called him "*The Diplomat.*" But not in the Kennedy White House.

To his friends he was "The Diplomat" (an ironic nickname he earned by his blunt outspokenness). To his superiors he was a (frequently maddening) force to be reckoned with. To his men he was hell-on-wheels. To 1960's America he was the Patton of air power —the superhawk honcho who wanted to "bomb Vietnam back into the Stone Age" (words he never uttered). But to posterity Curtis LeMay remains the greatest air commander this country has ever produced. Read the compelling story of his controversial career in

IRON EAGLE

The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay by THOMAS M. COFFEY

A Book-of-the-Month Club Alternate. Over 450 pages. $18.95, available at bookstores June, or use coupon to order. CROWN PUBLISHERS Inc.

CROWN PUBLISHERS, INC., Dept. 519
34 Engelhard Ave., Avenel, N.J. 07001

Please send me IRON EAGLE. I enclose $18.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling. N.Y. and N.J. residents, add sales tax. *10-day money-back guarantee.* Price is subject to change.

☐ Enclosed is my check/money order. OR charge my ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

#_____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Both the white and black members of the Family were doing precisely what they said they would do: striking blows against the capitalist state and its props. The whites were veterans of the Weatherman faction of SDS. Formed in 1969, Weatherman was dedicated to the proposition that white revolutionaries had the duty of providing assistance to blacks, whose own struggle was leading to a worldwide revolution. One of their slogans, "John Brown, live like him," expressed quite vividly their belief that this revolution might require self-immolation. (Brown had been hanged.) The group's first public act, the Days of Rage in Chicago in 1969, was a violent riot and pitched battle with Chicago police.

Weatherman's commitment to violence went well beyond that of most student radicals. Members drilled with guns; Bernadine Dohrn, an early leader of the group, praised the murder spree of Charles Manson's gang. Nor did it stop with rhetoric and playing Che Guevara. Terry Robbins, before he was blown up in the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion, had firebombed the home of a New York judge. When killed, he was working on an anti-personnel bomb that he hoped to plant at Fort Dix. Between 1969 and 1976 the Weather Underground Organization (WUO) claimed 26 bombings, including one planted by Bernadine Dohrn and Kathy Boudin in a Senate bathroom.

THE WUO split apart in 1976 with one faction, including Kathy Boudin, attacking backsliders who wanted to become more respectable. The "moderates" were accused of being racists and male supremacists. One of the specific charges leveled against them was failure to support the struggle for a black nation. The remnants of the WUO and some of their aboveground supporters evolved into the May 19th Communist Organization in 1978. The name derived from the birth date of Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X; it was also the date on which, in 1971, the Black Liberation Army (BLA) had begun its campaign against the police by killing two officers sitting in their patrol car in Harlem. Announcing its commitment to the "final defeat of U.S. imperialism," May 19th pledged the use of "armed struggle and waging people's war." Its own role in this struggle was to fight alongside black revolutionaries.

As for the Black Liberation Army, it was an offshoot of the Black Panther party. Originally loyal to Eldridge Cleaver, it had specialized in police killings before slipping into inactivity in the mid-1970's. Then, with the assistance of white radicals, a handful of blacks sympathetic to BLA aims took over the Lincoln Hospital Detoxification Program in the South Bronx. Under the pretense of helping to cure drug addiction, they built up a patronage machine, gained control of a substantial budget, and recruited new members to their gang.

When the Koch administration ousted the radicals from Lincoln DeTox (after revelations of mismanagement, fraud, and political chicanery), Mutulu Shakur, one of its guiding lights, set up the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America to serve as a new headquarters for the Family. Shakur planned the group's early robberies as a way of raising money for the black community; in fact, most of the money was used to support the new clinic, now bereft of government largesse. Several members had ties to the Republic of New Africa, a group whose goal was a separate black nation carved out of the Southern United States. Shakur also hit on the idea of using sympathetic whites to set up safe houses and to procure and drive getaway cars. The revolutionaries of May 19th offered a useful camouflage for the black gunmen. They, in return, could offer their services to the revolution.

Castellucci attributes to guilt feelings the refusal of any of the white defendants to engage in a traditional legal defense; it is just as plausible, however, if not more so, that they were only remaining true to their ideological code. In any case, several of the black defendants, their revolutionary nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding, cooperated with the prosecutors. Much of the stolen money, moreover, was used to purchase cocaine to support the drug habits of other members—to the point where a few of the committed black revolutionaries had to draw up rules, such as: "No use of cocaine more than once every thirty days, marijuana and alcohol more than once every seven days, and for not more than five hours on any given day."

IT IS a fitting epitaph to the radicalism of the 1960's that its last survivors wound up robbing banks to obtain drug money. White radicals, convinced of their historic and moral obligations to support the black revolution, were providing aid to a group of criminals who, under the auspices of a program to end the scourge of addiction in black communities, became drug addicts themselves. Despite its limitations, Castellucci's book offers a useful case study of the ideological detritus of the 1960's.

Ordinary People

HEROES AND HUSTLERS, HARD HATS AND HOLY MEN: INSIDE THE NEW ISRAEL. By ZE'EV CHAFETS. *Morrow. 249 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by MICAH MORRISON

IN HIS first book, *Double Vision: How America's Press Distorts Our View of the Middle East,* Ze'ev Chafets, who served as chief of the Israel government press office for most of the Begin era, gave the Western media a well-documented (and well-deserved) bashing for their unprofessional and sometimes downright dishonest coverage of various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In his second book, Chafets, an American-born Jew who has lived in Israel since 1967, sets out to correct a number of misconceptions about his adopted country. Some of his conclusions may not please an American Jewish audience. "As time goes by," he warns, "the Diaspora and Israeli Jews understand each other less

MICAH MORRISON, *a new contributor, spent several years as a journalist in Israel. He is now deputy director of the Committee for the Free World and editor of its monthly publication,* Contentions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and less. . . . The failure of Israel to attract the bulk of Western Jewry, and the slowly dwindling common ground between Israel and the Diaspora, are an outgrowth of the development of both communities, reflecting the fact that in the last twenty years a new generation of Israelis, born and raised in the country, has become a majority."

The old myths, and part of the old dreams, are dying. Although some in Israel might still aspire to create a socialist utopia, today's sabras "are not the heroic figures of Leon Uris's fantasies, nor the New Jewish Men and Women of the pioneer blueprint." What has moved to the fore in shaping contemporary Israel is not so much the dream of a model society, "a light unto the nations," as the somewhat contradictory but no less authentically Zionist vision of *am k'chol ha'amim,* "a nation like any other."

"Almost forty years after its birth," Chafets writes in this bitingly funny, irreverent, and often sage chronicle—whose style accurately mirrors the style of his new country—Israel "is still in the process of becoming, of evolving into a true expression of the fears and hopes and capacities of its people; an expression of what Jews are like when Jews are on their own."

To illustrate, he offers a gallery of impressionistic portraits: of extraordinary people like Menachem Begin and ordinary people like Leora and Shimshi Cohen, Israeli Yuppies who nevertheless believe that for Jews, Israel "is the end of the line. You've got to stop running sometime"; of low-budget rock stars and flashy union officials; of café owners and hookers; and always himself, a bumbling young immigrant trying to find a job and then rising abruptly in Israel's Byzantine political world, serving in the army, learning the language, slowly coming to understand the ethos of the Hebrew-speaking nation.

The best parts of the book are the sections dealing with Begin, with the rapid change in the status of Israel's Sephardi majority, and with the rise to power of the Israeli Right in the late 1970's. The 1973 Yom Kippur War, Chafets writes,

> opened the way for a reexamination of old values, which in turn set loose forces of personal economic ambition and materialism. Suddenly it became respectable to want a better standard of living and say so, to earn more and have more. The Yom Kippur War was the pivot on which Israel turned from being a highly controlled, pioneer economy and began developing into a more open, Western one; and this—along with the resolve of outsiders to get a piece of the action, and the new security hunger—was responsible for bringing the Likud to power in 1977.

The classic outsider in Israeli politics, of course, was Menachem Begin, and Chafets provides rare

REDEMPTION SONG

THE STORY OF OPERATION MOSES

LOUIS RAPOPORT

Stan Grossfeld, *The Boston Globe*

Between November 1984 and March 1985 some eight thousand black Ethiopian Jews—known as Falashas—were secretly airlifted from famine-racked Africa to Israel. The rescue, when it became public, caught the world's imagination. As William Safire wrote in the *New York Times:* "For the first time in history, thousands of black people are being brought into a country not in chains but in dignity, not as slaves but as citizens."

What came to be called Operation Moses is the complex story of an ancient people who felt themselves driven "home" to Israel. In *Redemption Song,* Louis Rapoport of the *Jerusalem Post* tells that story authoritatively and eloquently.

"A dramatic and heart-rending account . . . . Rapoport's report, the first to document this human odyssey, is strongly recommended."—*Library Journal*

HBJ *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich* • *Now at bookstores*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

insight into Israel's need for Begin after 1973: "For a period of confusion, he offered certainty. At a time of international pressure, he bristled with defiance." What the Labor party did not understand, and what was responsible for its sudden defeat in 1977, was that "after Yom Kippur the country wasn't primarily worried about Arabs; it was afraid of ghosts. People were spooked by the demons of the past, and they turned to Begin, who had seen the apparitions all along."

As Israel needed Begin, so Begin needed the Sephardim. After their arrival from Arab lands in the great immigration waves of the 50's, the Sephardim had found most of the paths to economic and political power blocked by Labor's Ashkenazi establishment; turning to Begin, the immigrant Sephardim and their sabra sons and daughters (aided by a split in the Israeli Left) put the necessary electoral muscle behind his 1977 bid for office. Chafets's thoughts on the Sephardi situation and his thumbnail sketches of Sephardim like David Levy, who left Morocco at age twenty and slugged his way through ridicule and defeat to become Deputy Prime Minister and a front-running contender for the leadership mantle of Begin's Herut party, should be required reading for anyone seeking to understand Israel today.

Chafets's analyses, although occasionally subverted by his penchant for zippy prose and pop metaphors—he refers to Begin as a "ghostbuster," for instance, and, in a cute phrase that is quite wide of the mark, as the "Black Pope of Zionism"—are often surprisingly fresh. Thus, he compares the Sephardim with American Southerners, sharing a "common geography, history, and religious tradition as well as an identifiable regional accent," and having about them an "aura of faded glory, a nostalgic pride in a great antebellum civilization." The comparison may not impress scholars, but it serves as an illuminating guidepost to the mentality of a group that is too often dismissed or patronized by its "betters" both in Israel and abroad.

Significantly, Chafets scants the problem of the Arabs in the occupied territories. In a book that draws on personal encounters and friendships to explain present-day Israel, the omission, interesting in itself, suggests the radical separation of Jewish and Arab cultures in day-to-day life. This applies to the Arabs of pre-1967 Israel as well as to those of the occupied territories. Most Israelis simply do not have many—or any—Arab friends; conversely, most Arabs do not attempt to look beneath the barest superficial clichés about Jewish Israelis. The two peoples, fated (or doomed) to live together in a tiny country, do their best to keep each other at arm's length; their mutual disinclination to break down some of the barriers between them cannot bode well for the future.

Minor faults aside, Ze'ev Chafets has succeeded in writing a book about Israel that is entertaining without being sentimental, informative without being preachy, and politically astute without being tendentious. In a crowded field, this is no small achievement.

Clean Hands

THE LAST TWO YEARS OF SALVADOR ALLENDE. By NATHANIEL DAVIS. *Cornell University Press. 480 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by ALVIN H. BERNSTEIN

THIS past March, after Ferdinand Marcos left the Philippines, President Reagan dispatched a message to Congress declaring his opposition to right- as well as left-wing tyrannies. He followed it with an unprecedented step, sponsoring a condemnation of Chile's military regime before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Though the White House publicly denied it, this represented a substantial change in policy. Donald Regan, White House Chief of Staff, later underlined the President's message when he was asked on television if the U.S. intended to topple General Pinochet's government. "Not at this moment, no," he replied.

Nathaniel Davis was the U.S. Ambassador to Chile from 1971 to 1973, when the coup occurred that toppled Salvador Allende and resulted in his violent death. He was therefore present at the creation of the military regime that is now proving an embarrassment to the Reagan administration. His political memoir is a conscientious, detailed, and informative account of Allende's presidency, his fall, and the U.S. role in both. As an *apologia pro vita sua* of sorts, it also reflects Davis's determined quest to find out what really happened in Chile while he was the U.S. Ambassador there. In the process, Davis provides insights into the nature of Chilean politics that ought to be useful to contemporary policymakers now struggling publicly with the dilemma of Pinochet's Chile.

Davis argues, in brief, that the fall of the Allende government owed little or nothing to U.S. actions. The Chilean economy collapsed more because of the regime's mishandling of it than because of any campaign by the U.S. government and the multinational corporations. What is more, Davis says, the 1973 coup was an exclusively Chilean affair and Allende was not murdered but committed suicide.

Davis has a hard row to hoe in making his case, after the 1975 revelations of the Church Committee about the pre-accession shenanigans on the part of the U.S. (These had included not only a plan, rejected by Davis's predecessor Edward Korry, to bribe Chilean Congressmen, but also the botched kidnapping of the army's commander-in-chief, an inconveniently strict constitutionalist, which resulted in his being mortally wounded. Three submachine guns were smuggled into the country for the kidnapping via the U.S. diplomatic pouch.) Despite the backdrop, however, few fair-minded readers will come away from *The Last Two Years of Salvador Allende* without knowing that they have just spent their hours with a truthful man. This is not just because the author's straightforward in-

ALVIN H. BERNSTEIN *is chairman of the Department of Strategy of the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tegrity touches every page but also because his analysis of what really happened in Chile between the autumns of 1971 and 1973 has real consistency.

It reveals three constants. One is the U.S. desire to appear clean. Immediately after Allende's inauguration, the National Security Council directed that the U.S. pursue policies designed to hurt the Chilean economy, prevent Allende from consolidating his grip on the country, and limit his ability to act against U.S. interests. At the same time, it insisted that the U.S. maintain a correct public posture to avoid providing Allende with an external target. As is often the case, the wish to appear honest, together with the lack of any effective options but the dire and dangerous, limited what could be done behind the scenes. The second constant is the Chileans' idea of acceptable political behavior. These pages draw for us a cumulatively striking portrait of a people whose independence and parliamentary traditions made them shrink instinctively from violating constitutional rules. At every turn men would appear who followed those rules in preference to parochial self-interest. The third constant is the steady aversion of the Ambassador himself to "dirty tricks." These three inhibitions set the parameters within which those who wished to see a Chile without Allende could operate.

How much of what happened to the Chilean economy during Allende's presidency can be laid at the door of the U.S., either government or corporations, acting openly or secretly? The economy did not begin screaming the first year, as President Nixon wanted, though it did whine a bit. This was certainly not the CIA's doing, however. Davis shows in detail how circumstance, together with domestic mismanagement of a morass of financial problems caused by the regime's political composition and its Marxist economic policies, resulted in economic and, eventually, political collapse.

In the early days, when the rich began fleeing the country, taking their money with them, and stocks slid along with sales of some durable goods, while the black market expanded, the Marxist government countered with some vigorous Keynesian pump-priming. This quick fix, together with establishment of a rural dole and initiation of a land-reform program, did help for a time. By September 1971, though, the inflation rate, running until then at a steady 15 percent, started to accelerate. Job creation ironically caused labor discipline to sag and in July the coal miners, railroad workers, and copper miners went on strike. These strains, as well as a one-third drop in the world demand for copper during 1971 and the government's spending spree, meant that by November nothing remained of the $350 to $450 million in foreign reserves that Allende had inherited from the years of high copper prices. The government therefore resorted to a drastic expedient: it declared a moratorium on its interest payments on the national debt.

At the heart of these problems lay nationalization. Used as a political tool by the socialist ideologues in Allende's coalition, who wanted to destroy private enterprise and the forces of reaction, it ravaged private business and industry. Forced into bankruptcy by price and credit controls, these then fell cheaply into the hands of the state. What is more, the expropriated industries, once nationalized, were mismanaged by administrators appointed for political reasons in a crony socialism at least as inefficient as its capitalist counterpart. The radical Left continued to press for nationalization even when it meant economic decline and, soon, political disorder. Within seven weeks of taking office, Allende had proposed a constitutional amendment to nationalize all of Chile's mines and on July 11, 1971, the Congress unanimously adopted his proposal. It provided for compensation within thirty years at not less than 3-percent interest. But the President

Shcharansky
Hero of Our Time

Several years ago, at the request of Shcharansky's family and friends, the eminent historian Martin Gilbert began work on the first fully documented, detailed account of the life of Anatoly Shcharansky. Using Shcharansky's own letters, extensive interviews with his supporters, and official documents, Gilbert dramatically recreates the experiences that turned a young computer scientist into a world-renowned "refusenik" and human rights activist.

Completed just as Shcharansky was released from a Soviet prison, this work is a vivid exposé of what life is like for Jews and other dissidents in the Soviet Union, and a timely reminder that principled resistance and unrelenting determination are essential to protect our most precious right—freedom.

At bookstores, or send $24.95 plus $2.00 in postage and handling to: Dept. JEG-3, Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010

MILNER SYGMA

"Gilbert's stunning recreation of Shcharansky's 1978 *mock-trial* is as memorable as Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*."
—*Publishers Weekly*

SHCHARANSKY
Hero of Our Time
A biography by
Martin Gilbert
Illustrated with photographs
At bookstores now

Elisabeth Sifton Books · VIKING

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In the beginning, Bob Packwood of Oregon was a specal media pet—one of those maverick moderates, principled but unpredictable, who refused to succumb to the 'extremists' who had taken over the Republican Party. As late as last year he was saying, 'I kind of like the present tax code.' Now he has produced an ultra-Reaganite tax bill. Congratulations, Mr. President. When you wake up and find the mainstream opportunists on your side, you're a success."

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review write to Dept. C-5. 150 East 35th Street. New York, N.Y. 10016.

The Olympic Crisis

Sport, Politics, and the Moral Order
by John Hoberman

Have moral issues been savaged by the International Olympic Committee's efforts to avoid controversy? Why has the Olympic movement been hobbled in its ideal of providing an innocent forum? Have totalitarian and tyrannical regimes used the Games to gain political ends?

Hoberman explains why the Olympic movement is faltering. He outlines the ideological development of Olympism and demonstrates the IOC's indifference to moral issues. $30.00

Orders/inquiries:
Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher
P. O. Box 210, 481 Main Street,
New Rochelle, New York 10802
Telephone: (914) 632-8487

EVEN MOST JEWS DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT THE JEWISH "RELIGION" IS...AND ISN'T.

In fact, the very term "religion" has been foreign to Judaism until recently—a concept borrowed from Christianity, as Rabbi Nicholas de Lange points out in this sophisticated introduction. Analyzing language as well as scripture, he sets the record straight by presenting Judaism on its own terms. Jews and non-Jews can understand, perhaps for the first time, its unique features.

$14.95 at better bookstores or direct from
Oxford University Press, Dept. HS, 200 Madison Ave., NY 10016

could, and on September 28 did, decide that profits since 1955 had been excessive, despite the fact that the corporations had faithfully obeyed the laws of this democratic land. On October 11, a week after Davis was sworn in as new Ambassador, the Chilean Comptroller announced that Kennecott and Anaconda would get no compensation at all for their huge mines.

By the beginning of 1972, therefore, the new government had shaken international confidence with its moratorium on national-debt payments, created irreconcilable disagreements with the U.S. over its nationalization-without-compensation, and begun to alienate even its own electorate through the domestic effects of its policies. In the by-elections, candidates of Unidad Popular (the leftist coalition headed by Allende) suffered substantial defeats. Inflation was negating higher wages, there were shortages in goods, land reform was making less progress than under the former government of the Christian Democrats, private industry was collapsing, and the nationalized sector was falling increasingly into the red. The national deficit expanded and the tax base shrank while the government frantically printed money in an attempt to control the political consequences of its economic policies. These worsened through 1972 as the inflation rate first doubled (in August), then jumped another 50 percent (in September), bringing the official increase in the consumer-price index to 100 percent for the first nine months of 1972. Riots and further strikes broke out, including a particularly violent and costly one by the nation's truckers.

This mess was not the fault of the U.S. At the UN later, Allende would blast ITT for having tried to prevent his inauguration, which was true, and accuse the multinational corporations generally of attempting to undermine his economy. This was less fair, for they could legitimately protest that they had not set out to do so, but rather had been forced to respond to the government's mismanagement. The bankers, too, had cut but not eliminated credit to the country because Allende had stopped servicing the national debt. His own action had increased the risk of lending capital to a regime that was weakening its economy by refusing to pay compensation to the private industries it was forcibly nationalizing. The startling fact is that, in April 1972, U.S. policy-makers, more concerned with their image than with destabilizing Chile's economy, gave the country $200 million in relief from its creditors. Indeed, it received more disbursements from public international sources under the Unidad Popular regime than in any comparable period of its history. As a result of all this help, by September 1973 when the coup came, Allende's Chile was running the highest per-capita debt in the world.

The U.S. did not need to intervene to weaken Allende's position. In November of 1972 he himself made it obvious how worried he was about the economic and political situation by inviting three military men into his cabinet. One, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Carlos Prats Gonzales, he made Minister of the Interior. This man was another strict constitutionalist who was reluctant to see himself and his colleagues from the other services drawn into the political arena. Their entry seemed necessary to hold the country together and Prats ended the truckers' strike by promising not to nationalize the industry. Given the Marxist direction in which the government was moving, these actions were at best cosmetic. Allende's invitation to the officer corps to play a political role probably resulted, as Davis suggests, in overcoming the military's natural inhibition against involvement in any coup.

On the economic front, Allende was doing no better. He wanted another quick fix and the future appeared to depend on what the Communist world might do for Chile. He had announced in July that he intended to turn to Eastern Europe for loans. At the end of November, leaving Prats in charge, he set off for Moscow, stopping on the way in Algeria to declare his support for the PLO. Even this avowal did not help him secure the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$500 million dollars in hard currency that he sought to shore up his crumbling economy. The Soviets, ever cautious about their investments and entanglements, advised him to seek an accommodation with the U.S. on the issue of copper compensation and offered him $200 million in credits, not cash. They evidently questioned Chile's future and, while they were willing to help, they were not about to pick up the tab.

The leftist ideologues in his government now added to Allende's difficulties. They had Chile openly tilting toward East European educational models in ways that could not possibly have been pinned on any U.S. efforts to destabilize. A reform "to inculcate the values of socialist humanism" in the schools brought the Catholic Church into the fray for the first time, as it too joined the opposition and began to thunder against the regime. In the March by-elections the opposition parties registered 56 percent of the vote, less than the two-thirds required for impeachment proceedings but enough to convince the military members of the cabinet to leave the government.

TENSION had now risen so high on so many fronts that some eruption of violence seemed inevitable, even in Chile, the longstanding democracy deeply committed to constitutionalist ways. More and more people, the Christian Democrats among them, were coming to believe that their problems could not be settled at the polls. The movement to launch a coup spread very gradually through the military, beginning among officers at the colonel level and later being taken seriously by the generals and admirals. While economic and political grievances played their part, the driving force was fear. After the March elections, the military watched with growing apprehension the increased flow of arms from Cuba and Eastern Europe to the leftist paramilitary forces in areas of Chile in effect controlled by the extreme left wing, not the government: parts of the countryside, shantytowns organized into militarized hamlets, and the worker-ruled industrial belts. Seeing their enemies grow stronger, the armed forces concluded that time was against them.

Events that summer removed the constitutional obstacles to military action. The Chamber of Deputies declared that Allende was acting outside the law and seeking total power. Before the end of August, the Congress and the Supreme Court had repudiated Unidad Popular's claim to legality. Following the lead of their civilian colleagues, the military also began distancing themselves from Allende's regime. On August 23 the generals expressed their dissatisfaction with the government in a vote of no-confidence against their commander-in-chief, General Prats, whom they saw as having joined the other side. Prats resigned and was replaced immediately by his deputy, General Augusto Pinochet.

ALLENDE'S political and economic troubles, inextricably entangled, came to a head during the first week of September. A second costly and violent truckers' strike had broken out in late July, and now the taxi drivers came out too, along with most professionals and about 125,000 shopkeepers. In a last-ditch effort to hang onto the reins, Allende decided privately to have a national plebiscite. On September 9, that expedient, if ever it could have worked, was compromised by a speech delivered by the Secretary General of Allende's own Socialist party, Carlos Altamirano Orrego, in which he denounced the forces of reaction, refused to deal with them, and threatened to destroy them with "the force of the people, their industrial commands, their peasant councils, their organization." Until that moment there were still those among the senior officer corps who were dragging their heels; despite his subsequent denials, evidence from impartial sources reveals that General Pinochet was one of them.

WASHINGTON

A ground-breaking study of an ideological miracle . . .

Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics

Joseph Dan

Joseph Dan explores 700 years of diverse Jewish theological creativity, including many extreme, radical, and even seemingly heretical schools of thought, which were integrated into a constructive, traditional Jewish ethics within the framework of Hebrew literature. The ability of Jewish ethics to absorb and sustain conflicting ideas presents a fascinating chapter in the history of Jewish ideas.
148 pp. hardbound, ***$20.00***

The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies, sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington

☎ **Order toll-free 1-800-441-4115**

University of Washington Press
P.O. Box C-50096, Seattle, WA 98145

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The speech, however, confirmed the military's worst fears and that very day they scheduled their coup for September 11. In the early morning hours, while working on the speech that would announce the plebiscite he hoped would save him, Allende received word that the coup had begun.

From 9:30 A.M., first with guns, then with tanks, the armed forces attacked the Moneda Palace. The first aerial assault, just before noon, made further resistance impossible. The alternatives were surrender or death. One of the doctors in the President's entourage describes how Allende, as he walked in the final procession leaving the Moneda to surrender, withdrew to a separate room, placed under his chin the muzzle of an automatic rifle given him by Fidel Castro, and blew out his brains.

Within days of Allende's suicide, the Left invented and spread abroad the story that the military had murdered him. Despite her early statements to the contrary, his wife eventually joined their ranks, as did Fidel Castro. The media helped weave a tangled web of fact and fiction that reinforced the tale. With the attention to detail of a classical philologist, Davis traces the origins and course of this fabrication and makes as convincing a case as possible that the doctor's version of events is correct. He labors to reconstruct reality from the available evidence but he labors at a disadvantage. The carefully reassembled jigsaw puzzle he places before his reader lacks a central piece: Allende's body was buried the day after the coup and none of the twenty-seven photographs taken of it has ever been made public.

DOES Davis convince us also of his view that the U.S. played no real role in this coup? After thorough digging, he and the Church Committee were able to unearth only one attempt at "dirty tricks" during his ambassadorship. It began just before his arrival, but came to fruition while he was in office without his knowledge. CIA officers in Santiago sent documents, including a forged letter, to a Chilean officer outside the country in an attempt to convince the military that the police investigative forces were in league with the Cubans against them. The effects of this operation are not traceable, but both the Committee and Davis seem satisfied that it was the last of its kind.

The covert measures Ambassador Davis permitted consisted solely of funneling some $2 million a year to the moderate opposition (mostly the Christian Democrats and the National party) and to the free press. He thought it justified to work covertly to keep Chile an open society but drew the line at underhanded operations designed to destabilize or disrupt it. Even the reader who instinctively believes that the U.S. should not bribe Congressmen, inspire violent kidnappings, or deceive its friends in a foreign country comes away from this book wondering whether Davis should not have been more troubled by the prospect of Allende, unimpeded, consolidating his Marxist grip on the country.

The Ambassador derides President Nixon's concern over the geopolitical importance of having a second Cuba in Latin America. Apparently Nixon took seriously the warning of an Italian businessman that Allende's victory would mean a "red sandwich" between Chile and Cuba. On hearing this, Davis quips, "It would have been quite a Dagwood Special: four thousand miles of heterogeneous societies and regimes would lie between those two slabs of Marxist pumpernickel"—a good line but not an adequate response to the legitimate, long-term security concerns of the U.S. and its regional allies.

It would be more difficult for Davis to take the moral position he does against covert intervention in Chile if the Chilean military had not acted and a Marxist regime with ties to the Soviet bloc were now operating in South America. What that part of the world would look like at this point is of course a matter of speculation, but Davis never confronts the issue. An elected Communist president in the U.S. sphere of influence (even one elected by only a third of his countrymen) is the nightmare of any believer in democracy. The perennial problem of how clean you can keep your hands in a dirty world endures because statesmen and administrators have a moral obligation to preserve our interests abroad, as well as to remain true to our domestic principles.

The Goddess That Failed

THE PASSION OF AYN RAND. By BARBARA BRANDEN. *Doubleday. 421 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by TERRY TEACHOUT

THE history of any ideology is in large part a catalogue of purges, a sour and acrid rule to which the American Right has been no exception. One of the earliest right-wing purges carried out in this country took place in 1957 when the novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand was for all intents and purposes read out of the conservative movement. The agent of her demise was *National Review*, which elected to publish a scathing review of *Atlas Shrugged*, her new novel, written by none other than Whittaker Chambers.

The juxtaposition of Ayn Rand and Whittaker Chambers was (and is) an intriguing one. Ayn Rand, a Russian émigrée turned screenwriter and novelist, had written in *The Fountainhead* an impeccably conservative novel of ideas which sold several hundred thousand copies and was subsequently made into a popular movie starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Chambers, a reformed Communist spy turned senior editor of *National Review*, was widely accepted at the time as a conservative totem, largely because of *Witness*, his best-selling memoir. Chambers's decision to attack Ayn Rand in the pages of *National Review* was thus a fateful one, and his review of *Atlas Shrugged*, "Big Sister Is Watching You," was couched in terms that left no room for doubt as to the seriousness of her failures of orthodoxy:

> The news about this book seems to me to be that any ordinarily

TERRY TEACHOUT *is associate editor of* Harper's *and an editor of the conservative newsletter* Modern Times.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sensible head could possibly take it seriously, and that, apparently, a good many do. . . . Out of a lifetime of reading, I can recall no other book in which a tone of overriding arrogance was so implacably sustained. Its shrillness is without reprieve. Its dogmatism is without appeal. . . . From almost any page of *Atlas Shrugged* a voice can be heard, from painful necessity, commanding: "To a gas chamber—go!"

Ayn Rand's followers promptly inundated *National Review* with irate correspondence. Ayn Rand herself never again spoke to its editor, William F. Buckley, Jr. (Within a few years, in fact, she was calling *National Review* "the worst and most dangerous magazine in America.") But the anathema pronounced by Chambers stuck, and Ayn Rand was subsequently dismissed as a fringe figure by the majority of the American conservative establishment.

This dismissal, however, had no measurable effect on her popularity as an author. Her four novels alone continue to sell at the rate of over 300,000 copies a year. And the half-life of the Chambers anathema proved to be shorter than anyone expected. "It is normally a matter of two decades," John Chamberlain wrote in 1961 with Ayn Rand in mind, "before the young take over the seats of power in the name of what they have learned to believe twenty years ago." George Gilder, right on schedule, named Ayn Rand in the preface of his *Wealth and Poverty* as one of the people who "shaped my early economic ideas." Alan Greenspan has never made any secret of his youthful association with Ayn Rand. Most of today's younger conservatives readily admit to having read her books closely. Barbara Branden, in the final chapter of her new biography, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, devotes fifteen pages to a list of public figures who take (or took) her seriously. Nearly three decades after the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, it is respectable to have been influenced by Ayn Rand.

Was it a mistake to have rehabilitated Ayn Rand so thoroughly? The publication of this full-scale biography provides an excellent opportunity to reconsider her claims to recognition as a serious novelist and conservative philosopher. Mrs. Branden was closely linked to Ayn Rand, both personally and professionally, for nineteen years. She conducted over forty hours of taped interviews with Ayn Rand in preparation for a biographical sketch published in the 1962 symposium, *Who Is Ayn Rand?* Although Mrs. Branden's judgments are inevitably colored by the specifics of her troubled relationship with her subject, who had a lengthy affair with the author's first husband, the psychologist Nathaniel Branden, it is hard not to feel on reading this book that she has been at some pains to give us the facts as honestly as emotion permits.

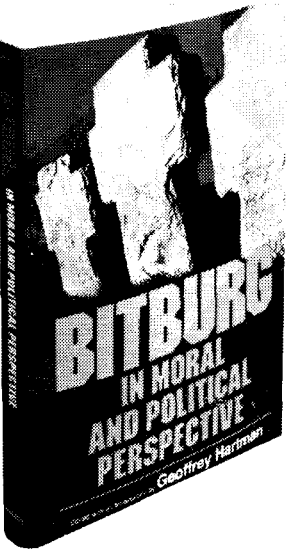
To be sure, Barbara Branden is an excruciatingly bad stylist, trapped in the throes of what Wolcott Gibbs used to call "ladies'-club rhythm," and her swooning rhapsodies blot every page:

> One saw his warmth—the frustrated warmth of a lonely man—especially in his dealings with the animals he loved; he treated the least stray animal with the exquisite gentleness of a parent; a part of Frank always remained the boy who had stolen sick chickens from his neighbors in order to heal them. Bitterness? Contempt? Passion? These were not attributes that had relevance to Frank.

But Mrs. Branden's hopeless style is offset by her intimate knowledge of the details of Ayn Rand's personal life, and these details are undoubtedly central to the question of whether or not Ayn Rand's philosophy was as "wildly grotesque and excessive" as Whittaker Chambers claimed.

"My personal life," she wrote in 1957, "is a postscript to my novels; it consists of the sentence: *'And I mean it.'* I have always lived by the philosophy I present in my

BITBURG
IN MORAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE



Edited with an Introduction by Geoffrey Hartman

A routine diplomatic visit to the cemetery at Bitburg in May of 1985 turned out to be the most volatile political event of the year. What did Bitburg reveal? Why did it become such an issue? This thought-provoking book will help us to understand these issues.

Among the contributors are distinguished survivor novelist Primo Levi, historian Saul Friedländer, William Bole of the Religious News Service, social thinker Jürgen Habermas, and political scientist Raul Hilberg.

cloth $29.95 paper $9.95

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Tenth and Morton Streets
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

books—and it has worked for me, as it works for my characters." But did it?

ALICE ROSENBAUM was born into the Russian Jewish bourgeoisie in St. Petersburg in 1905. With the onset of revolution the Rosenbaums moved to Odessa, where they lived in extreme poverty until 1921, when the final defeat of the White Army led Fronz Rosenbaum to return to what was now Petrograd. Alice began writing short stories at the age of nine, deciding at sixteen to earn her living as a novelist and philosopher. ("If all philosophers," she later said, "were required to present their ideas in novels, to dramatize the exact meaning and consequences of their philosophies in human life, there would be far fewer philosophers—and far better ones.") Even as a schoolgirl, she knew precisely what she despised most about the Soviet system:

> My concept of good and evil, already in the process of being formed, saw its vindication everywhere. . . . I realized they were saying that the illiterate and the poor had to be the rulers of the earth *because* they were illiterate and poor. . . . It was the demand for the sacrifice of the best among men, and for the enshrinement of the commonplace, that I saw as the unspeakable evil of Communism.

Alice's opportunity to leave the USSR came in 1925 when an aunt who had moved to Chicago prior to the revolution got in touch with the Rosenbaum family. Alice resolved to learn English, move to the United States, and become a Hollywood screenwriter. ("I began to go to movies every night," she would recall. "My real enthusiasm for America, apart from its political principles, was formed then. I saw the essence of what Americans could be and ought to be.") She emigrated to America in 1926, changing her name to Ayn Rand and moving to Hollywood within a year.

A chance meeting with Cecil B. DeMille on her first day in Hollywood led to a series of jobs ranging from junior writer at DeMille's studio to head of the RKO wardrobe department, with serious writing relegated to evenings and weekends. Her play, *Night of January 16*, a courtroom drama which makes use of a jury composed of audience members, was produced on Broadway in 1935; *We the Living*, an autobiographical novel, appeared in 1936 to poor sales and negative reviews. The failures of these early efforts had no visible effect on Ayn Rand, who remained serenely confident of her own importance as an artist and thinker.

In 1943 Bobbs-Merrill published *The Fountainhead*, a 754-page novel about a fiercely individualistic architect "who does not exist for others" named Howard Roark. Diana Trilling's curt review of *The Fountainhead* in the *Nation* was typical of critical reaction to the novel:

> Ayn Rand's Howard Roark is . . . a giant among men, ten feet tall and with flaming hair, Genius on a scale that makes the good old Broadway version of art-in-a-beret look like Fra Angelico. And surrounding Howard Roark there is a whole galaxy of lesser monsters —Gail Wynand who is Power, and Peter Keating who is Success, and Dominique who is Woman. . . . Surely *The Fountainhead* is the curiosity of the year, and anyone who is taken in by it deserves a stern lecture on paper rationing.

The irony in Mrs. Trilling's last sentence was greater than she could possibly have known. Until 1944, frightened by bad reviews and stymied by the wartime paper shortage, Bobbs-Merrill was unable to publish editions of *The Fountainhead* larger than 5,000. But by 1948 over 400,000 copies of the novel had been sold, largely by word of mouth, and Ayn Rand subsequently sold the movie rights to Warner Brothers for $50,000. King Vidor directed the film version of *The Fountainhead*, for which Ayn Rand supplied an original screen adaptation that was shot virtually intact. She later claimed, in a form letter sent to inquiring readers, that the success of *The Fountainhead*

> has demonstrated its own thesis. It was rejected by twelve publishers who declared that it had no commercial possibilities, it would not sell, it was "too intellectual," it was "too unconventional," it went against every alleged popular trend. Yet the success of *The Fountainhead* was made by the public, . . . single, individual readers who discovered it of their own choice, who read it on their own initiative and recommended it on their own judgment.

THE story repeated itself when Ayn Rand first began showing *Atlas Shrugged* to publishers in 1956. Most were put off by the novel's thousand-page length and explictly right-wing political stance. ("Would you cut the Bible?" she asked Bennett Cerf when he suggested shortening a chapter.) When Random House brought the book out the following year, the prestige reviewers were universally hostile. Granville Hicks, writing in the New York *Times*, dismissed *Atlas Shrugged* as "not in any literary sense a serious novel," while Gore Vidal announced that "Ayn Rand's philosophy is nearly perfect in its immorality." But the public ignored the critics again, so totally that *Atlas Shrugged*, nearly three decades after its initial publication, continues to sell a minimum of fifty thousand copies in paperback every year.

While working on *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand told an inquiring reporter that "it will combine metaphysics, morality, economics, politics, and sex—and it will show the tie between metaphysics and economics." She pitched the book to Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer of Random House as "an extreme, uncompromising, moral defense of capitalism [which presents] a new philosophy." The nature of this philosophy is succinctly explained in the novel's afterword:

> My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.

Ayn Rand's followers have tended to accept these assertions without cracking a smile. But the way in which she chose to dramatize her "new philosophy" is revealing: her *magnum opus*, it turns out, is cast in the unlikely form of a thousand-page detective story.

As strange as it seems that a *conte philosophique* should be writ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ten in the style of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a casual examination of *Atlas Shrugged* reveals even more extraordinary oddities. All the heroes are violently colored caricatures with jutjawed names like Ellis Wyatt and Ken Danagger, all the villains spineless cretins with slimy names like Wesley Mouch and Floyd Ferris. (Nora Ephron once advanced the intriguing thesis that an Ayn Rand hero could be spotted solely by calculating the vowel-consonant ratio in his name.)

As a satire on the follies and dangers of collectivism, *Atlas Shrugged* has genuine merit. But as a work of imaginative literature it is unsatisfactory in the extreme. The plot is preposterous, the treatment deadly serious in its romantic utopianism. The mixture, a familiar one, has been dominating the world's best-seller lists for decades. *Atlas Shrugged* carries this particular strain of popular literature to its furthest limits: it is a book which permits the reader to wallow shamelessly in extravagant romance while simultaneously feeling like a real intellectual. The results, which suggest a bizarre fusion of *Gone With the Wind* and F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, are irresistibly appealing to the adolescent mind, and it is hardly surprising that *Atlas Shrugged* has proved to be such a durable seller. But one inevitably wonders how anyone beyond the age of sixteen or so ever found it to be, as its author so resolutely claimed, an artistically serious exposition of serious ideas.

AYN RAND's stylistic peculiarities begin to make a kind of sense when seen in the context supplied by Barbara Branden's biography. None of Rand's acquaintances dared to challenge her on intellectual or aesthetic grounds: friends who dared to differ with her *obiter dicta* promptly ceased to be friends. But the sheer narrowness of her pronouncements was startling. Kipling's "If" was her favorite poem, Rachmaninoff her favorite composer, Victor Hugo and Mickey Spillane her favorite novelists. Ayn Rand's "lack of information," Mrs. Branden recounts,

> seemed to some of her friends appallingly evident. . . . Over the years we were to hear Ayn excoriate the "grim, unfocused malevolence" of Rembrandt—to a painter; Beethoven's "tragic sense of doom"—to a musician. . . . She would dismiss much of the history of literature as anti-romantic and unstylized, and the history of philosophy, with the sole significant exceptions of Aristotle and aspects of Thomas Aquinas, as mystical, dishonest, and irrational.

This intellectual narrowness, accompanied by a starchily old-fashioned atheism of the very worst kind, inevitably led her to espouse a militantly positivistic philosophy of life. "In my novels," she wrote, "and in actual life, the alleged victories of evil are made possible only by the flaws or the errors of those who are essentially good. Evil, left to its own devices, is impotent and self-defeating." And she was as firm in her optimism as she was convinced of her personal genius. "Her proudest boast about the philosophical system she would later devise," Mrs. Branden observes, "was that if one accepted any part of it, consistency required that one accept the total of it."

Such comprehensive philosophies rarely bring peace of mind to those who develop them, and after the publication of *Atlas Shrugged* Ayn Rand began to despair of the ultimate conversion of the world to her way of thinking. "I had no more inspiration for fiction," she told a friend at the time:

> Fiction, to me, *is Atlas Shrugged*. My mission was done. . . . I no longer know where are the intelligences to which I've *always* addressed myself. I feel paralyzed by disgust and contempt. . . . And if I feel contempt for the whole culture—if it feels like I'm living in the last days of the Roman empire—then what sense does it make to continue writing?

Her response to this dilemma took the form of a systematic attempt to disseminate the philosophy outlined in *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. She began lecturing around the country, drawing large crowds and evoking surprisingly enthusiastic responses. Together with Barbara and Nathaniel Branden, she founded the Nathaniel Branden Institute, a New York-

Policies & Politics

U.S.–SOVIET RELATIONS
The Next Phase
Edited by ARNOLD L. HORELICK. "A timely and important contribution to a vital debate on the future of U.S.-Soviet relations."—Zbigniew Brzezinski. Contributors: Abraham S. Becker, Seweryn Bialer, Robert D. Blackwill, Francis Fukuyama, Harry Gelman, William G. Hyland, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Richard Pipes, Marshall D. Shulman, Dimitri K. Simes, John Van Oudenaren, Edward L. Warner III, and the editor. (A Book from the Rand/UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior.) $9.95 paper; $35.00 cloth

STRATEGIC NUCLEAR TARGETING
Edited by DESMOND BALL and JEFFREY RICHELSON. In this new book, strategists examine various facets of the actual war plans of the U.S. and those of its allies and adversaries. Contributors: David T. Cattell, Lawrence Freedman, Colin S. Gray, Michael Kennedy, William T. Lee, Kevin N. Lewis, F.S. Nyland, George H. Quester, Bennett Ramberg, David Alan Rosenberg, David Yost, and the editors. (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs.) $29.95

THE MILITARIZATION OF SPACE
U.S. Policy, 1945–1984
By PAUL B. STARES. "The information and analysis contained in this study are not only relevant to current debates over developing space weapons; the book is also likely to have lasting value as the standard account of United States military space policy from 1945 to 1980."—John M. Logsdon, The N.Y. Times Book Review. "A treasure trove of information."—Robert M. Bowman, The L.A. Times Book Review. "A valuable and important book."—Foreign Affairs. (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs.) $25.00

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
P.O. Box 250
Ithaca, New York 14851

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based organization which conducted classes and supplied taped lectures in "Objectivism," the Randian philosophy, as well as publishing a monthly magazine called *The Objectivist*.

By 1967 the Nathaniel Branden Institute had grown sufficiently to move to a suite of offices in the Empire State Building. "It seemed time," Mrs. Branden writes, "to offer the students what they appeared to want: a social life that was integrated to their philosophical interests." What they got instead was a quasi-cult which revolved around the adoration of Ayn Rand and her fictional heroes. The psychological effects of this worship on its practitioners, as one of Ayn Rand's acquaintances recalls, were dire:

> Because they had learned the philosophy predominantly from fiction, the students of Objectivism thought they had to be like Ayn Rand heroes: they were not to be confused, not to be unhappy, and not to lack confidence. And because they could not meet these self-expectations, they bore the added burden of moral failure.

The Rand cult disintegrated in 1968 when Nathaniel Branden, who had been her lover since 1955, confessed that he was in love with a younger woman. Ayn Rand immediately broke with both Brandens and disbanded the Institute. Her later years were largely devoted to a series of futile attempts to bring *Atlas Shrugged* to the screen, first as a movie and later as a nine-hour television miniseries. "If all those concerned do their best," she said in reference to the first of these attempts, "the cultural consequences will be incalculable." She died of lung cancer in 1982.

"I HAVE always lived by the philosophy I present in my books—and it has worked for me, as it works for my characters." Judging by the lavish evidence of emotional instability provided by Barbara Branden in *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, to take this claim at face value would require one to reject the philosophy so painstakingly set forth in *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. But there are better grounds than this for rejecting the philosophy of Ayn Rand, a system of thought which is as intellectually jejune as it is internally consistent.

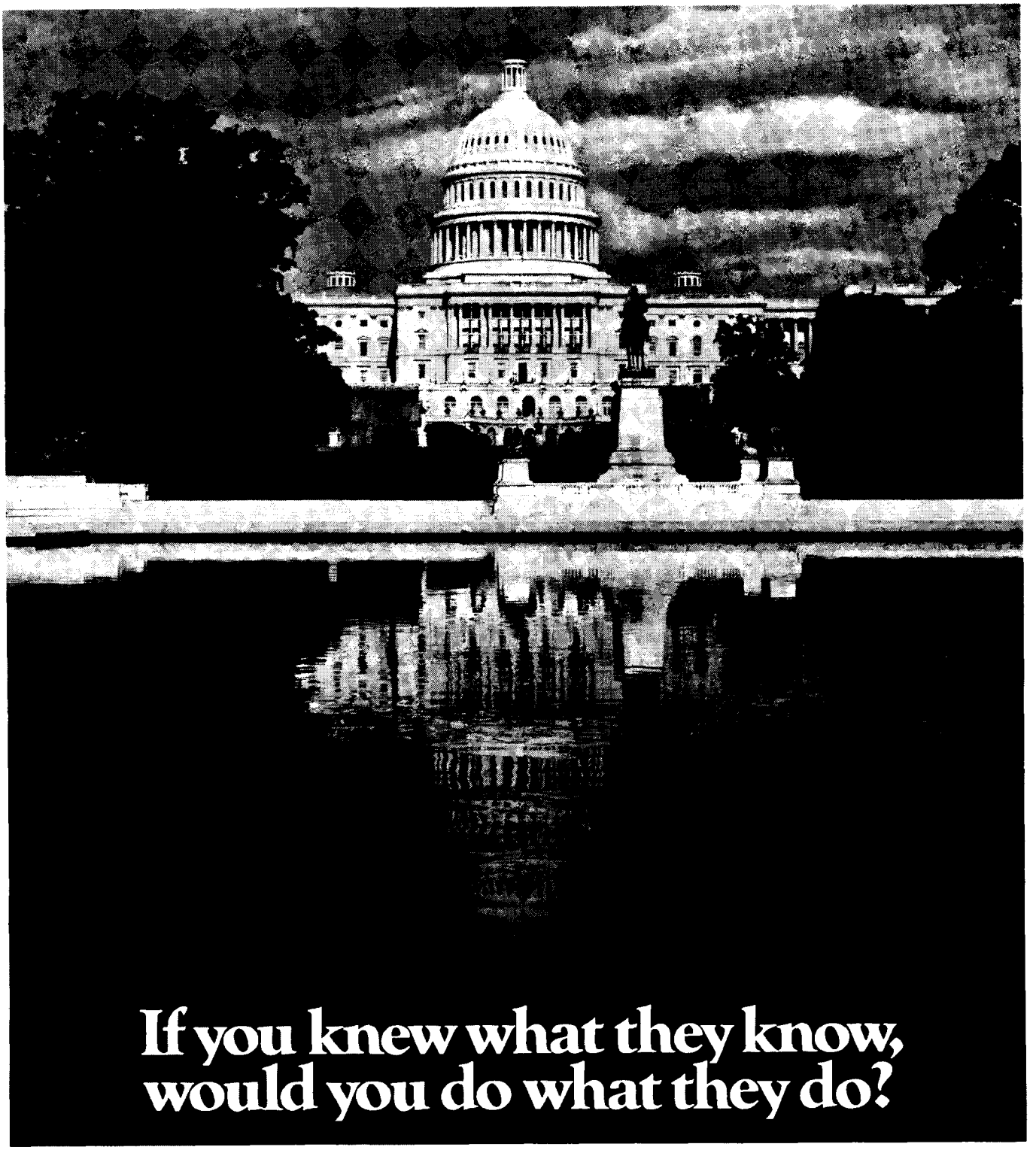
Conservatism has always viewed itself as an essentially tragic philosophy of compromise between competing impulses and even competing goods. The Randian world, by contrast, is elegantly self-correcting, an earthly paradise where truth is obvious, man perfectible, compromise the only deadly sin. To take such an idealistic vision seriously is necessarily to part company with conservatism as it has been construed from Burke onward. It is no accident that Ayn Rand consistently rejected the "conservative" label, preferring to call herself a "radical for capitalism." Indeed, she knew a diverse assortment of genuine conservatives ranging from Albert Jay Nock to Henry Hazlitt, and she despised the lot of them:

> I didn't conclude then that conservatives were actually hopeless traitors. Just that a lot of them were weak and cowardly. I still thought that it was an issue of ignorance. It took years for me to gradually discover that it was an amoral, *anti*-moral attitude. . . . they didn't believe capitalism could be saved.

One should note, however, that Ayn Rand's utopian vision is in certain respects strikingly congruent with the political attitudes now espoused by some younger conservatives, many of them born after the baby boom. In the world of *Atlas Shrugged* capitalism is an absolute good, morality a distillate of hedonism, philosophy a utilitarian means to a short-term end. These premises mesh neatly with the amalgam of low taxes, isolationism, and moral libertarianism that is the "conservatism" of a new generation of congressional aides, think-tank habitués, and political activists, and Ayn Rand's current respectability may be in some measure a product of the enthusiasm of these people, who read her in high school and have continued to take her seriously ever since. ("If there is a novelist with unusual appeal among the Reagan organization," the New York *Times* correctly observed in 1981, "it is Ayn Rand, proponent of enlightened self-interest.")

This group by no means makes up the entire younger generation of conservatives, and it has yet to be seen whether its members will exercise any lasting influence on the conservative movement as a whole. But because of them we can safely assume that Ayn Rand, Mrs. Branden's sensational revelations notwithstanding, will be with us for some time to come. The thought is not a comforting one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



If you knew what they know, would you do what they do?

More than any other single force on earth, America's foreign policy will determine what kind of world we and our children live in.

And every one of us can influence that policy. That's what the nonprofit, nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association is all about: working to develop the kind of informed public opinion that will help our government make enlightened, responsible foreign policy decisions.

Last year alone, more than 250,000 Americans across the nation—in discussion groups, classrooms and community centers—participated in our *Great Decisions* program.

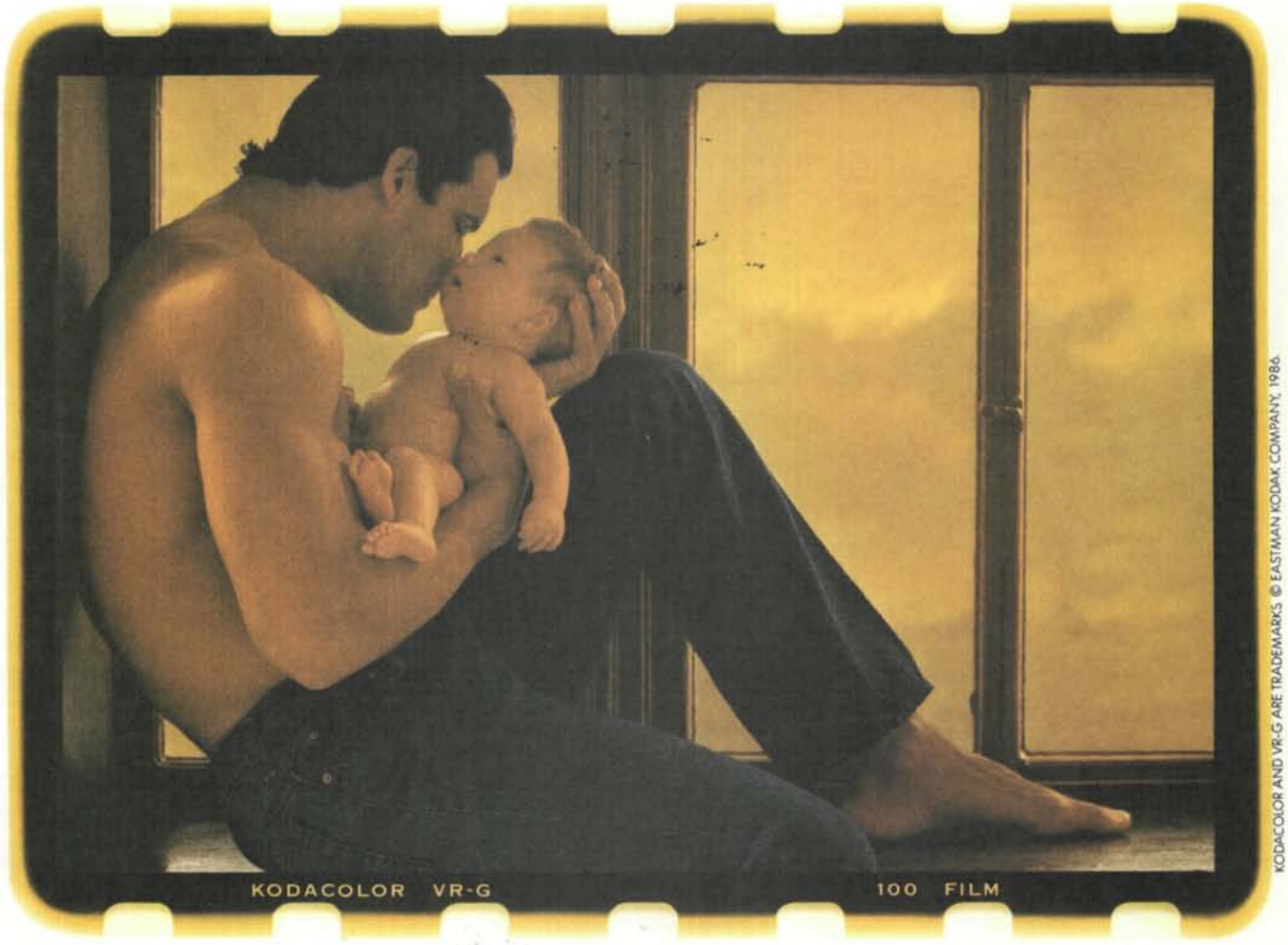
The *Great Decisions* book provides objective background on eight key foreign policy issues. Discussions help you form your views; you express them on opinion ballots, which FPA presents to Washington officials.

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 1918

To find out more, call us now at (212) 481-8450. Or write to Foreign Policy Association, Department A, 205 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Donations are fully tax deductible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE COLOR OF LIFE



KODACOLOR AND VR-G ARE TRADEMARKS © EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, 1986.

ANNOUNCING THE MOST ACCURATE, REALISTIC COLOR IN PRINT FILM.

Kodacolor VR-G 100 FILM

NEW KODACOLOR VR-G FILM
THE COLOR OF LIFE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED